

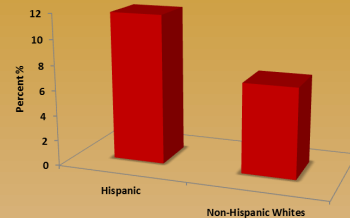


Actor Network Theory, Irrational Health Beliefs, & Health Myths: Dead-Wrong Assumptions in the Diabetes Network

Background

IHBs

- Irrational health beliefs (IHBs) refer to the illogical opinions, attitudes and thoughts about health that lack empirical support and pragmatism.¹
- IHBs and health myths may impede an individual's ability to seek health information, seek medical care, adhere to medical treatments or even make reasonable health-care decisions.²



Diabetes

- Diabetes is a chronic condition characterized by the body's inability to properly control blood sugar levels.
- Minorities are more prone to developing diabetes.
- Hispanics have the highest prevalence of diabetes.³

Theory

- Activity Theory** is generally concerned with culturally mediated and socially situated activities. Looks at the big picture and explains why.
- Actor Network Theory** is concerned with the interaction between actors and the networks and helps explain the moment-by-moment translations and mechanisms of persuasion. It helps answer how.

Research Questions

This research project was specifically designed to explore the health belief "diabetes is curable."

RQ1: How is information about the curability of diabetes spread?

RQ2: What are the main intermediaries and mediators in the process?

Methods

- Identified and categorized existing networks
- Identified and categorized the main actors and switchers disseminating information about IHBs
- Conducted a Google search using the term *diabetes is curable*. Used the URLs from the search results to determine the source of the information (social webpage, health webpage, media webpage, etc.).

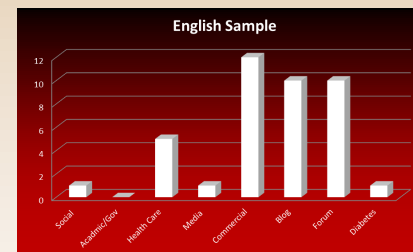
English Sample

Diabetes is curable

Results: 59,800

Relevant Non-repeated: 391

Randomly Selected: 40



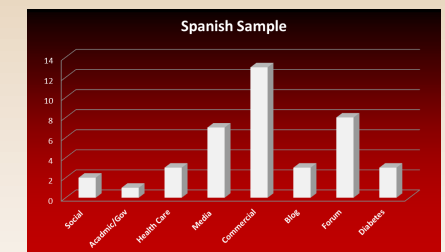
Spanish Sample

La diabetes se cura.

Results: 70,500

Relevant Non-repeated: 259

Randomly Selected: 40



Data Collection and Analysis

Grounded Theory & Content Analysis

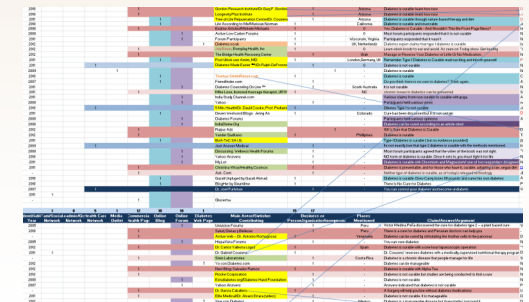
Line by Line

Made Connections

Conceptualized

Identified Key Words

Categorized





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Findings

- Blog Network:** Claim introduced by a single blogger – supported or rejected by participants
- Forum Network:** Claim is introduced by participants – supported or rejected by other participants
- Healthcare Network:** Claim is usually dismissed by this network. Provide scientifically sound information and educate.
- Commercial Network:** Information about the curability of diabetes in this *network* was generally spread through the “voices,” opinions and beliefs of professionals perceived as experts in healthcare.
- Media Outlet Network:** Disseminated information about diabetes in the form of news content, advertisements, and even radio programing
- Family/Social Network:** Comments made by individuals through those networks.
- Academic/Government:** Disseminated information through academic reports. No opportunity for response or comments.

Discussion

RQ1: How is information about the curability of diabetes spread?

- Problematization:** Individuals find diabetes a major problem and search for information and assistance.
- Interessement:** The individual’s desire to hear that there is a cure may cause a person to disassociate from other agents and their beliefs.

RQ2: What/Who are the main intermediaries and mediators in the process?

- Intermediaries:** Individuals with low health literacy, no power, cannot influence the claim, cannot be ignored.
- Mediators:** Bloggers, businesses, organizations, participants who reject the claim, anyone who has the power to spread or stop the spread of the IHB.
- Activity Theory/WHY:**
- Subjects:** Low-health literacy, little ability to understand the outcomes, individuals who are not thinking about how their actions affect others.
- Labor Division:** Individuals of low SES, generally less educated and more vulnerable to claims, lack scientific understanding, the educated take advantage of them.
- Rules:** Generally individuals are not going to make claims that will hurt others. This rule is ignored online.
- Community:** Social context is different for the Hispanic community. Hispanic participants are more willing to try alternative medicines. They want to believe in the claim.
- Mediation:** Online information is mediated through the existing networks. These networks may become significant for individuals who need family or peer support for gathering and applying information
- Enrollment:** Individuals who make the claims try to recruit others in their effort, especially people who have a commercial interest in the claim.

References

1. Fulton J, Marcus DK, Merkey T. Irrational health beliefs and health anxiety. *J Clin Psychol*. 2011;67(6): 527-538
2. Department of Health and Human Services. PAR-10-133 Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy. <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-10-133.html>. Published May 5, 2010. Accessed May 19, 2011
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National diabetes fact sheet: national estimates and general information on diabetes and prediabetes in the United States, 2011. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011.