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## Web as a new shortcut in patient-doctor communication and medical care relationship

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Dear Editor,

Web communication has been described as a mean to empower patients to learn about their health and it may represent as a privileged way to favour a participatory medical model in healthcare. However, health-operators need to be aware of the power of internet and they need to recognize that it profoundly changed the relationship between patient and doctor. This letter wants to be a message for all health operators working with oncological patients in order to stimulate a critical thinking in their usual clinical practice.

In recent years, many web instruments such as blogs, forums, and chats have developed as a mean to empower patients to learn about their health through internet. This aspect is quite evident in rare conditions<sup>1-2</sup> where patients are often well-connected and updated by using internet as a source of information for their latest treatment, potential benefits or adverse events as well as patients' association activities. The web has contributed to develop a new model in medical care: the participatory medicine. Participatory Medicine is a model of health care that "seeks to achieve active involvement by patients, professionals, caregivers, and others across the continuum of care on all issues related to an individual's health".<sup>3</sup>

In our digital era, the development of particularly designed web systems such as blog, chat forums, as well as mobile applications for patients have allowed an increment of health literacy, sense of empowerment and they have improved the use of personal skills and medical knowledge. The interaction with the web have also determined cost and time savings, as well as error reduction, and efficiency.<sup>4</sup>

However, not all health-operators working with patients have realized that the implementation of all these form of web interactions have seriously impacted patient-doctor communication. For example, the contemporary oncological patient has typically downloaded apps, googled the diagnosis, he has explored blogs and he has read forums about treatment possibilities much more before to receive the confirmation of his diagnosis or his treatment options in a medical room We need to recognize that internet has allowed patients to find information that would have been unthinkable in another era, and access to often high-specific knowledge impacting at the psycho-emotional and decision making level. In this perspective, it is crucial for doctors to consider what the patients know and how they built knowledge to share with them the comprehension of internet and/or app devices information, and to share with them the comprehension of emotional aspects that my impact on that knowledge (e.g., when information is perceived as difficult or frightening).<sup>5</sup> Patient involvement in healthcare management has rightly been defined the way to triumph of the contemporary healthcare management, and apps and web may exemplify the impeccable solution to reach this goal. However, all health-operators should be aware of this change and they should learn how to get patient more skilled and engaged in their healthcare through the web. In this perspective, we can promote a real and effective participatory medicine between patients and doctors.

Sincerely,

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