Differences in Use & Impact of an E-health System Among Breast Cancer Patients

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Internet as preferred source of health information

- 132 million Americans are online
- About 64% of online users have searched for health information on the Internet

Source: Health Information National Trends Survey, Hints Briefs
http://hints.cancer.gov
Actual vs. Preferred Sources of Cancer Information

Source: Health Information National Trends Survey, Hints Briefs
http://hints.cancer.gov
Who Suffers from the Digital Divide?

Source: United States General Accounting Office, Telecommunications Characteristics and Choices of Internet Users, February 2001
Is the Divide Narrowing?

- Over a 6-month period in 2000:
  - Internet access among those with incomes under $30,000 grew by 10%  
    - (compared to 3% among those with incomes of $75,000 or higher)
  - Access among those with a high school diploma or less grew by 11%  
    - (compared to 6% among college grads.)
  - Gap remains constant between black and white populations (8% growth in both groups)

Source: The Pew Internet & American Life Project, Internet Tracking Report, February 2001
CHESS (Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System)

- Developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Center for Health Enhancement Systems Studies, CHESS is a computer-based system of integrated services designed to help individuals cope with a health crisis or medical concern.
Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System (CHESS)

- CHESS provides patients & families with:
  - Disease specific information
  - Social support
  - Decision support
  - Skills training
CHESS-Living with Breast Cancer Module

- Questions and Answers
- Instant Library
- Ask an Expert
- Personal Stories (text & video)
- Resource Guide
- Discussion Groups
- Decision and Conflicts
- Action Planning
Differences in CHESS Use Among Low SES Breast Cancer Patients

- Compared to their Caucasian counterparts, African American users
  - used social support components less and information components more
  - used support groups more instrumentally (e.g., to discuss treatment vs. day-to-day activities)
  - were less likely to use online support services after 3 months
  - used self-tracking and decision services more
Possible Reasons for Use Pattern Differences

- Low SES African American women may be less frequent users of online support groups because they may have:
  - sufficient interpersonal support in their community
  - limited keyboarding skills
  - literacy concerns, and
  - view online groups as mechanism for discussing treatment rather than social support
Differences in Benefits Among Low SES Users

- Compared to their Caucasian counterparts, African American users
  - scored higher on social support measures
  - had reduced levels of negative emotions
  - were more likely to overcome perceptions of unmet needs
  - were more likely to become involved in their health care
  - had higher functional well-being and fewer breast cancer concerns
Implications for Closing the Digital Divide in eHealth Systems

- African Americans may be more inclined toward an oral tradition of expression; therefore, audio/video systems should be explored.

- The penetration rate for mobile phones is higher among blacks (65%) than whites (62%)\(^2\) and many are Internet enabled, making mobile phones a viable delivery platform.

Implications for Closing the Digital Divide (cont’d)

- As baby boomers age, seniors will make up a larger proportion of experienced technology users, providing greater opportunity for increasing access to eHealth systems.
Relevant CHESS articles

