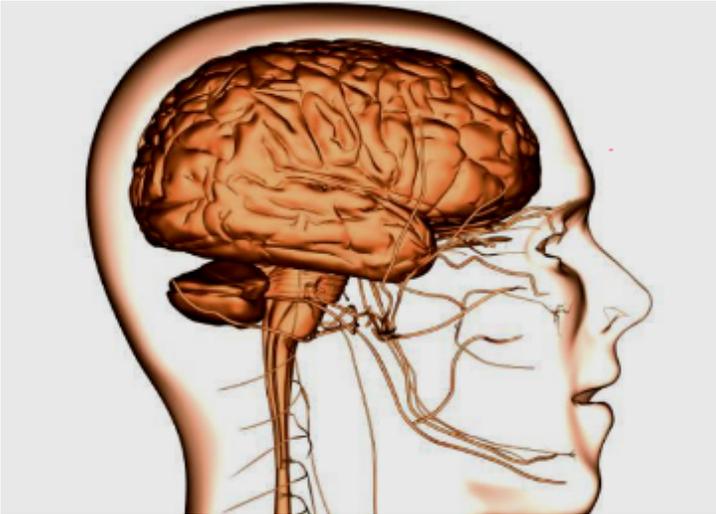


Twitter: A new tool for health research

22 February 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Twitter: A new tool for health research



A new study by the University of British Columbia finds that using Twitter can help physicians be better prepared to answer questions from their patients. It also states that more and more health care professionals are embracing social media.

The researchers spent six months monitoring conversations surrounding stem cell research related to spinal cord injury and Parkinson's disease on Twitter. They found roughly 25 percent of the tweets about spinal cord injury and 15 percent of the tweets about Parkinson's disease were from health care professionals.

The study also found that the majority of tweets were about research findings, particularly the ones perceived as medical breakthroughs. The most shared content were links to research reports.

It also discovered that the users tweeting about spinal cord injury and Parkinson's disease differed. Users who tweeted about spinal cord injury talked about clinical trials, while users who tweeted about Parkinson's disease mostly talked about new tools or methods being developed to conduct research.

Less than five percent of the tweets spoke out against stem cell research, which surprised the researchers.

"We expected to see debate on stem cell controversy. But people are sharing ideas of hope and expectations much more than anything else," said Ms Julie Robillard, lead author and neurology professor at UBC's National Core for Neuroethics and Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health.

The study was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

