The role of virtual communities for the social network of cancer patients

This study investigates the determinants and effects of virtual communities on the development of social relationships within the social network of cancer patients. Influencing factors on the formation of virtual relationships and their effect in the form of social assistance are researched. Following an explorative approach it is examined whether online communities meet their theoretical potential to provide an environment where social relationships can be established that help cancer patients to cope with their situation. Deduced from these results recommendations for patients using online communities and providers administrating online communities are outlined.

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