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Title of abstract: Diabetic Foot Self-management during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Feasibility of a Social Media-based Program in Canada.

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Doctoral program stage: Active in data collection

Background. Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) are severe complications linked to excess disability and mortality. Diabetes complications are anticipated to rise because of the COVID-19 pandemic impact on the healthcare system. Available community and health facility-based education programs for people with diabetes (PWD) are mostly face-to-face, restricted, and do not align with the current isolation/distancing policy for COVID-19 control. Also, the impact of these educational programs on sustaining self-management adherence critical to prevent DFUs is limited. Social media has the potential to empower PWD in DFUs prevention and limit the risk for COVID-19 infection.

Research Question: What is the feasibility of social media as an alternative method to engage PWD in DFUs prevention during the pandemic?

Method. This feasibility study follows Brewin and Bradley's partially randomized preference trial design. The study intervention is a peer-led self-management education program via a private Facebook group platform involving 2-3 daily posts in text, videos, photos, polls, and web links for three months. Data collection approaches include three online surveys at 2 to 3-time points, one telephone interview, and Facebook analytics.

Result. Participants' recruitment, intervention implementation, and data collection are ongoing. To date, 19 participants have been recruited (intervention [n=12] and control group [n=7]). Most participants had a moderate DFUs' risk level (n=13) and poor adherence to foot self-management recommendations (n=16) at baseline. The participants' mean acceptance score at one-month post-intervention is 87.3 ± 9.5 (cut-off point = 70).

Conclusion. Preliminary data revealed that the participants engaged with the intervention and found it acceptable because it enhanced their foot self-care knowledge and awareness of DFUs as serious diabetes complications. The overall study findings will help gain insight into the feasibility and efficacy of using social media to prevent DFUs that could inform recommendations for integration into diabetes self-management programs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.