

## This is Not Your Father's Oldsmobile, Nor Your Child's Social Network

By David Sheon | Jun 4, 2013



Does social networking conjure images of teenagers who share seemingly worthless online videos of watermelons dropped from atop buildings? Well get this:

Americans OVER age 45 represent the largest percentage increase in social media usage in the past year, now up to 38 percent in 2012, compared to 31 percent in 2011 (Source: Edison Research).

What does this mean for improving health care outcomes? At least one analysis finds a prolific growth in online

patient communities, where peers help one another find solutions, determine the right time to go to the doctor, and essentially crowd source solutions to their problems.

Many social networks specifically for patients have launched using a number of different business models. Here are just a few:

- Inspire has social networks for patients with various diseases and health conditions, each sponsored by health organizations.
- The Mayo Clinic has created a platform for patients with various diseases, not limited to the 500,000 patients treated at the Minnesota-based hospital system annually.
- Patients Like Me is a web-based portal for patient-to-patient communication that was started by two brothers at MIT. They pledge complete transparency in terms of funding sources.

Are social networks resulting in better outcomes or improved access? Any success stories out there you'd like to share? What are some of the best sites for connecting with others who have similar health conditions?

***To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).***