Use of online social media by female dermatology residents to communicate with their patients.

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Background
The use of social media platforms by both dermatologists and patients is accelerating. However, the magnitude of use and the reciprocal effect of use in communication are still largely unknown in Egypt, and as yet have to be fully evaluated.

Objective
To assess and quantify the extent of involvement of Egyptian female dermatology residents on social media sites and their attitudes toward communicating with patients online.

Participants and methods
The present study involved a quantitative, cross-sectional survey using a sample of female Egyptian dermatology residents attending an annual dermatology conference. The tool used was a self-report questionnaire filled by the participants.

Results
Among the 116 dermatology residents in the present study, 73.28% were living in urban areas and 58.62% practiced dermatology in a public hospital. Among them, 91.38% used Facebook, but the most common method for interaction with patients was the telephone (61.21%). Most of the participants (66.38%) never discussed social media usage with their patients; however, 50% of the responders found it appropriate to interact with their patients professionally through e-mail. Moreover, 73.28% thought that correcting wrong health information online was their duty. Most participants (54.31%) were hesitant to immerse themselves completely into social media due to concerns about public access. A ‘friend request’ on Facebook was received by 33.62% of the sample from one of their patients, and 39.66% mentioned that they would do nothing if they receive such a request.

Conclusion
Although the use of social media, especially Facebook, is very common among female dermatology residents, the telephone still remains the most common method for interaction with patients. Dermatologists find it appropriate to interact with their patients professionally through e-mail; however, most of them never discuss social media usage with their patients. This reflects the technological gap between doctors and most patients, especially in rural areas. Inability to have proper medical information is a consequence of lack of proper use of internet by many patients.

Keywords: dermatology, Egypt, Facebook, residents, social media