

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**AN EXPLORATION STUDY ON
CHANGES IN DIETARY AND
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG
MALAY HYPERTENSIVE PATIENTS
AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ON THE
PATIENT EDUCATION WEBSITE**

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of infection control measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic has produced restrictions on the lifestyle of hypertensive patients, specifically dietary and physical activity. Patients may benefit from the use of various nutrition education tools, particularly online resources such as websites. However, it is important to acknowledge their perceptions and preferences regarding the available patient education websites. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the experience of hypertension management, specifically dietary and physical activity, among Malay hypertensive patients during COVID-19, as well as their perceptions of the information and the design features of the available patient education website. A phenomenological mixed-method was chosen as the research method for this study. The purposive sampling method was used to recruit adults who were attending the UiTM Primary Care Specialist Clinic. In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 Malay hypertensive patients, aged between 18 and 49 years old, using a semi-structured interview guide throughout the interview session. Data was collected from September to December 2020. Data was analysed using the content analysis method to describe patients' experiences and perceptions. The results outlined divergent changes in dietary practices among participants, including improvement, worsening, as well as no changes in some groups of individuals. Although the findings demonstrated a decrease in physical activity among individuals, some were still able to maintain their level of activity. During the pandemic, the internet was highlighted as the most frequently used reference source for health-related information. The analysis revealed seven themes regarding patients' suggestions to improve the available patient education website: 1) content delivery method, 2) content topic, 3) selection of words and sentences, 4) order of sentences, 5) layout and typography, 6) visual help tools, and 7) navigation and interactivity. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has both negatively and positively impacted on dietary practices and physical activity. These changes could have a substantial impact on the population's health in the short and long term, if they are sustained. The suggestions proposed regarding the information and design features of the website can be considered when developing or modifying tailored hypertension patient education websites in order to assist patients in better understanding and improving their hypertension management, hence promoting a better quality of life.

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