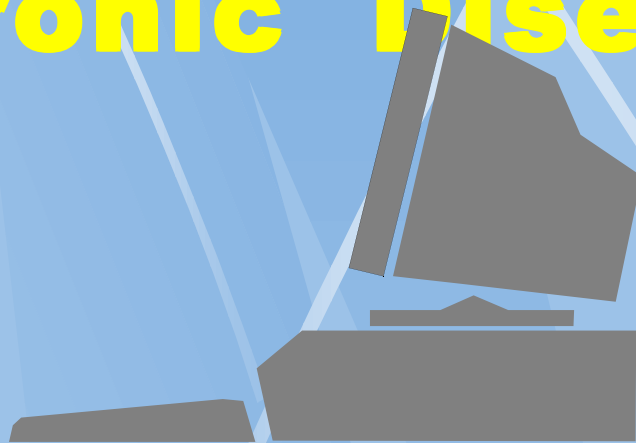


Do Online Support Groups Actually Help People With Chronic Diseases?



**John Zrebiec, MSW, CGP
Karen Chalmers, MS, RD**

Joslin Diabetes Center, Boston



PURPOSE

- To provide a moderated web based educational and emotional resource
- To track utilization patterns and consumer satisfaction

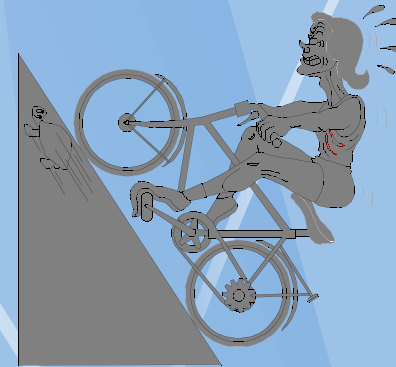
METHODS

Established 3 moderated chat rooms where users may:

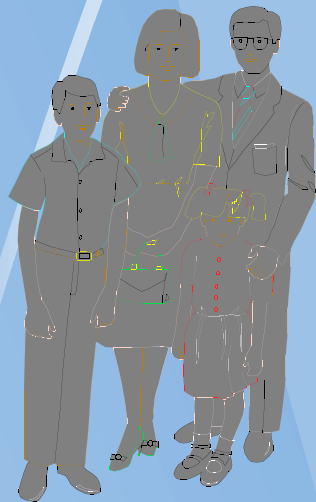
- Read, post or respond to messages left by participants
- Get timely and accurate answers to questions from professional moderators

Joslin Discussion Groups

Get Motivated



A Family Affair

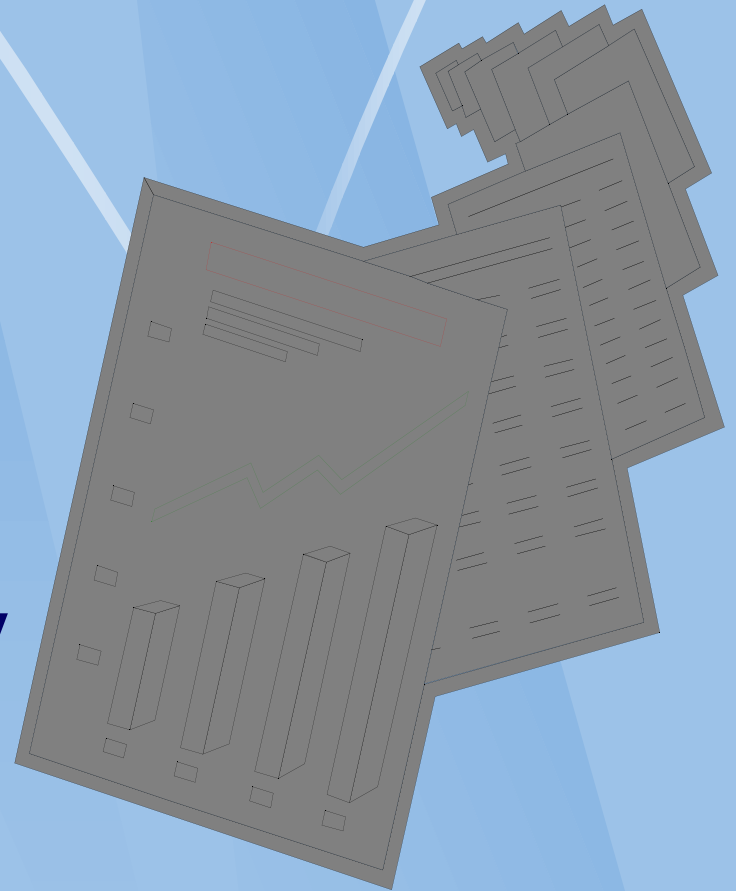


Eating for Life



Methods of Analysis

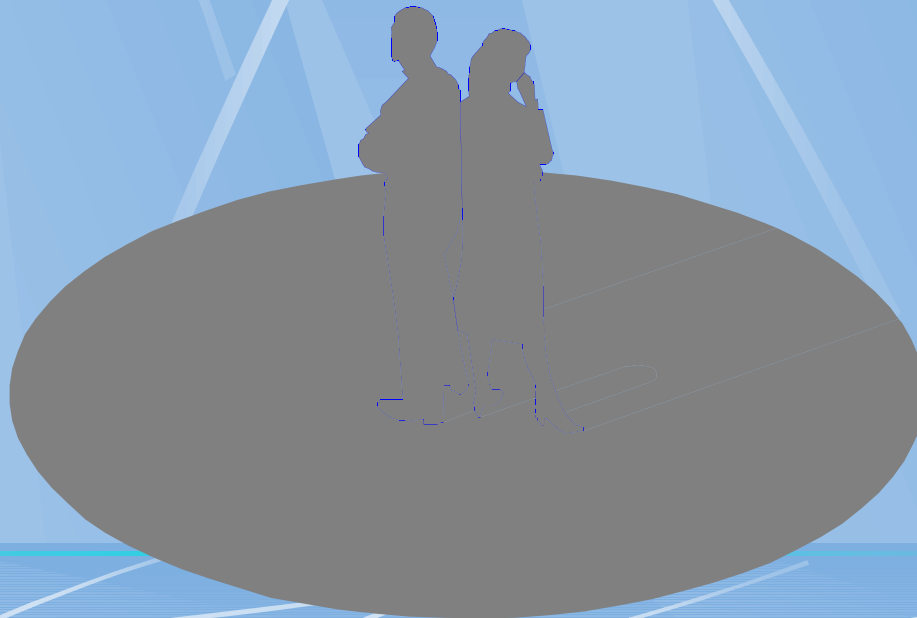
- Usage Patterns
- Message Analysis
- Satisfaction Survey



Usage Patterns

March 1998 - November 1999

47,365 user sessions were tracked by computer for trends over time

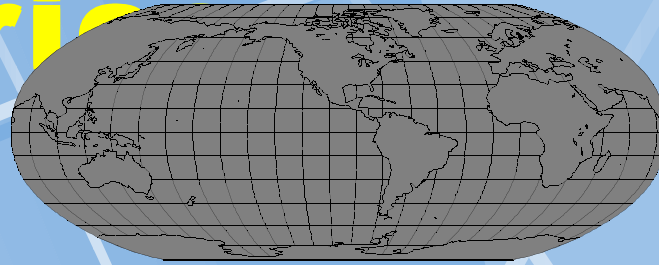


General Statistics: Users

- Number of User Sessions 47,365**
- User Sessions per Day 65**
- Average User Session Length 15:05**
- Average User Joslin Site 9:29**

- Users per Weekday 76**
- Users on Entire Weekend 115**

10 MOST ACTIVE Countries

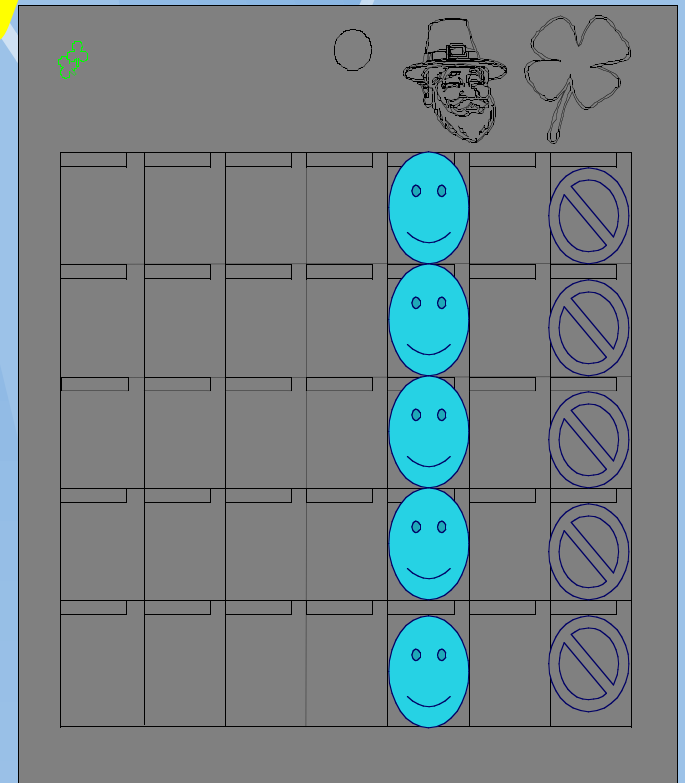


COUNTRY SESSIONS	USER
United States	13,627
Canada	784
Namibia	175
Brazil	120
Australia	51
Japan	42
United Kingdom	39
New Zealand	35
Spain	27
Mexico	22

Summary of Activity by Day

**Most Active Day:
Thursday**

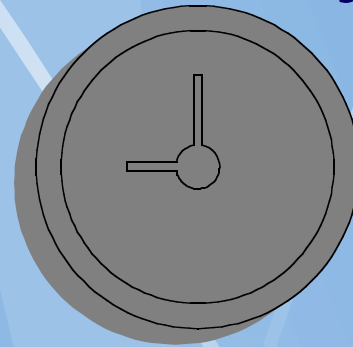
**Least Active Day:
Saturday**



Summary of Activity by Day

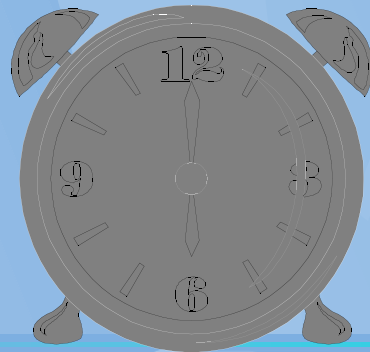
Most Active Hour of the Day

9-10 P.M. EST

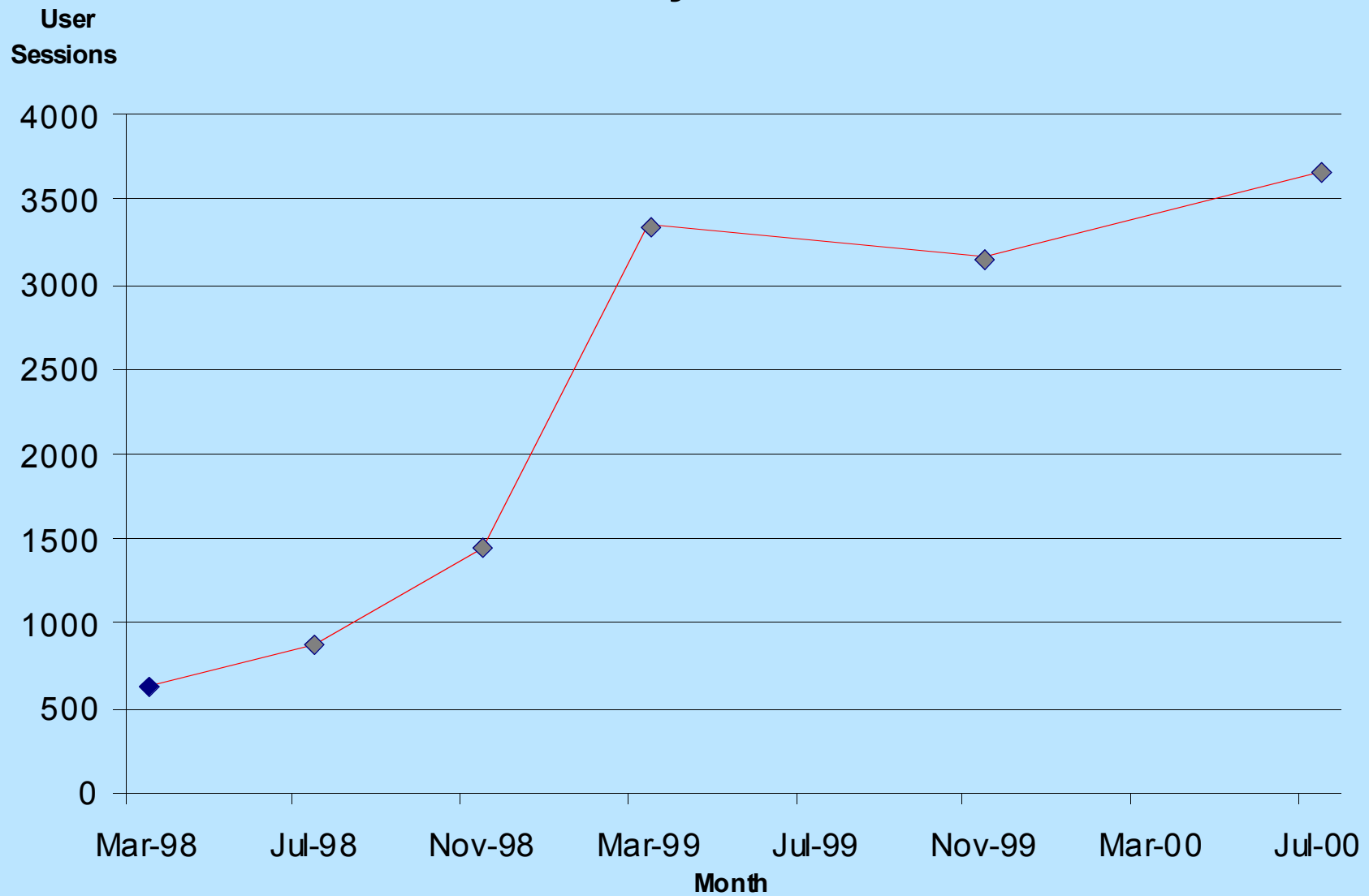


Least Active Hour of the Day

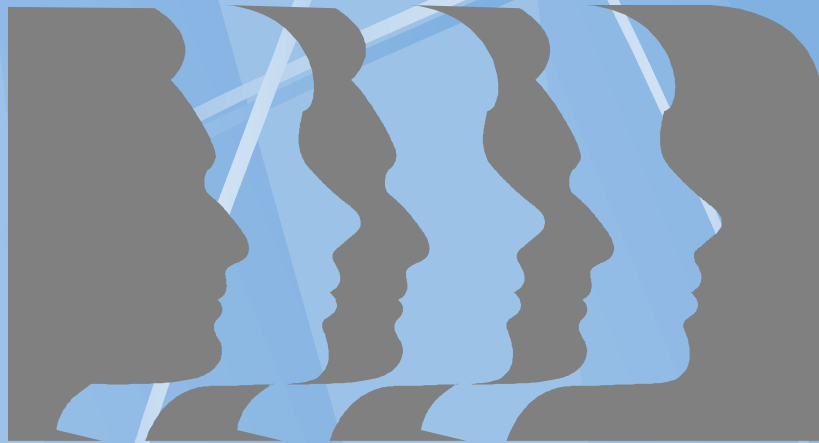
5-6 A.M. EST



User Activity Over Time



User Frequency Patterns



First 8 Mo

3/98-10/98

Last 8 Mo

4/99-11/99

July

2000

Number of User Sessions

7,645

27,782

3,667

Average # User Sessions/Day

33

89

118

Average Session Length

7:56

26:49

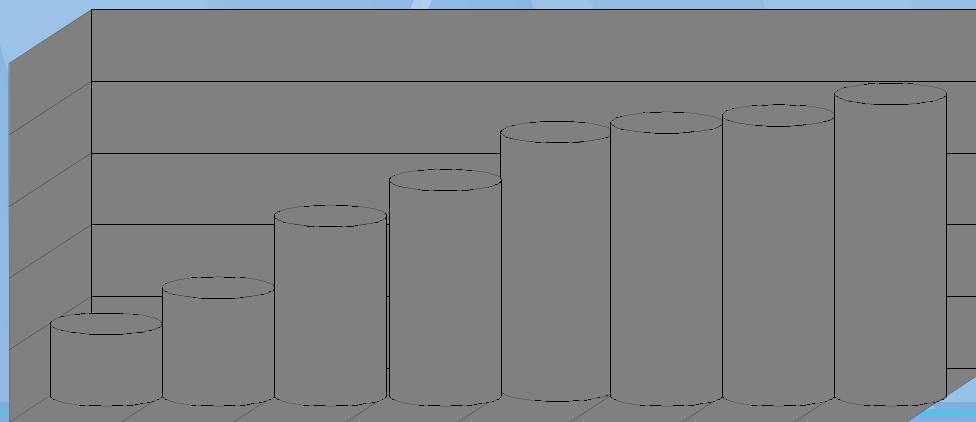
11:25

More Than One User Session

19%

Message Analysis

3,574 User messages were categorized according to the predominant message topic.



'GET MOTIVATED'

CHAT

1. Emotional Support
2. Nutrition
3. Complications
4. Diabetes Resources
5. Managing Blood Sugars

‘A Family Affair’ Chat

1. Giving Support
2. Managing Blood Sugars
3. Complications
4. Resources
5. Nutrition

‘EATING FOR LIFE’ CHAT

1. Carbohydrate
2. Fad Diets
3. Sweetners
4. Managing blood sugars
5. New diabetes - what do I eat?

Satisfaction Survey

569 Surveys were completed
from 1,525 emailed to
registered

USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

AGE

30 or Older

84%

GENDER

Female

64%

DIABETES

Use Insulin 43%

Do Not Use Insulin 37%

Don't Have Diabetes 20%

YEARS DIAGNOSED

Years

<5	54%
6-10	14%
11-15	9%
>16	23%

USER DESCRIPTION*

Non-Joslin Patient	63%
Family Member	20%
Joslin Clinic Patient	7%
Healthcare Professional	6%
Other	4%



*** not mutually exclusive**

categories

HOW DID USERS KNOW ABOUT THIS CHAT AREA?

Joslin Home Page	44
Search Engine	24
By Chance	11
Friend	7
Another Website	5
Diabetes Publication	2
Other	7

HOW OFTEN DID USERS VISIT CHAT?

1 - 3 times

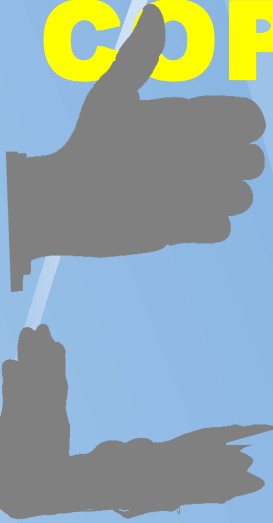
57%

> 4 times

***43%**

*** 28 % visited > 6 times**

HOW DID PARTICIPATION IN THESE CHAT ROOMS AFFECT COPING WITH DIABETES?



Positively 79%

Negatively <1%



Not at All 20%

HOW DID USERS RATE THESE CHAT ROOMS?

Poor	1%
Fair	7%
Good	41%
Very Good	35%
Excellent	16%

WHAT DID USERS LIKE MOST ABOUT THIS CHAT

Information Provided 40

Professional Response 28

Peer Response 25



Other

6

Summary

Most Users Are 30 or Older.

Most Users Are Women.

**Most User Have Diabetes
Less Than 5 Years.**

Summary

Users are most interested in nutrition (Postings = 49%).

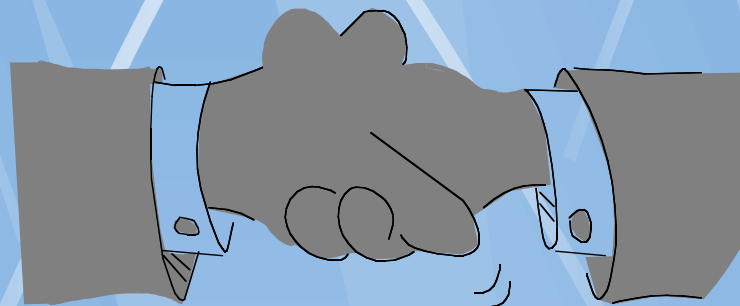


Users like information and interaction with professionals the most.

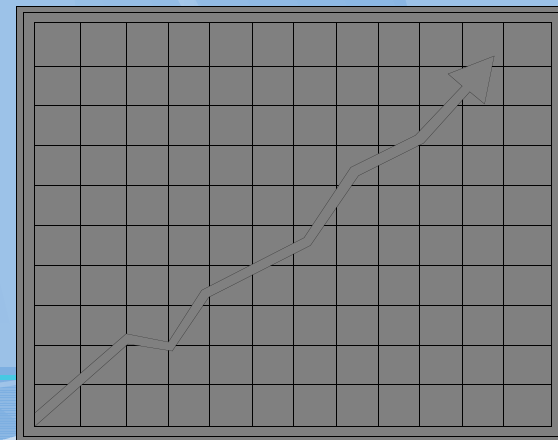


Summary

Most users rate chat rooms as having a positive effect on coping with diabetes.



Use is growing rapidly.



CONCLUSIONS



Interactive internet technology is a potentially effective strategy for engaging people around diabetes, especially in the first 5 years following diagnosis.