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The Social Network' of weight loss

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Singapore: Social media programs designed to help people lose weight can be a useful tools in the global fight against obesity, according to a recent study.

"One advantage of using social media over others is that it offers the potential to be much more cost effective and practical for day-to-day use when compared to traditional approaches," said Mr Hutan Ashrafian, department of surgery and cancer, Imperial College, in a statement. He added, "The feeling of being a part of a community allows patients to draw on the support of their peers as well as clinicians. They can get advice from their doctor without the inconvenience or cost of having to travel, and clinicians can provide advice to many patients simultaneously. There are also possible downsides, such as potential privacy issues and a need for the patient to be internet savvy, so it may not be right for everyone."

Researchers reviewed the data from 12 studies across the United States, Europe, East Asia, and Australia that evaluated social networking services for weight loss.

"The studies we looked at were the first to investigate social media approaches to obesity. There needs to be more research into this area to see what approaches work best for which patients, in light of the dramatic global adoption of social media tools and content. The use of social media to treat obesity encourages patients to be more proactive and empowers them to contribute towards their own treatment. It's not the only solution to the obesity epidemic, but it should be introduced as an element of every country's obesity strategy, " added Mr Ashrafian.