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## There's an App for That: Promoting Health App Use in Rural Ireland

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## Introduction

- Of the 7.8 billion people around the world, approximately 3.2 to 3.5 billion people, or 41-45% of the world's population, have access to smartphones.
- Multiple mobile health apps, available via smartphones, have been developed to promote better health practices such as smoking cessation, healthy eating, weight loss, exercise, and stress management.
- Mobile health apps are effective for keeping track of one's health data such as heart rate, exercise/fitness activities, daily food/water intake, blood pressure/glucose levels, weight tracking and distance travelled or amount of steps taken in a day.
- Mobile health apps have been successfully used for health promotion activities but lack of knowledge and comfort in using health apps are barriers to their use.

## Purpose

Purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of mobile health app educational sessions on increasing knowledge, comfort in using health apps, and intent to use in an underserved rural area in Ireland.

## Methodology

- Setting for this study was a community center in rural Ireland.
- One group pre-test/post-test design was used to evaluate mobile health app educational sessions.
- Convenience sample of 56 students (middle/high school) and adults participated in a mobile health app educational sessions.
- Prior to each educational session, participants completed confidential surveys assessing self-reported level of knowledge, comfort, and likeliness of using health-related mobile apps.
- ODU Health Science students provided an overview of mobile health apps and demonstrated how to download and use free health apps such as MyFitnessPal, iPhone Health and Pedometer.
- Participants completed a post-test survey of their self-reported knowledge, comfort, and likeliness of using health-related mobile apps.

After the educational session, participants were more knowledgeable about health apps, more comfortable using health apps and reported they were more likely to use them. The post-test scores for each item increased by 25-30 points on a 100 point scale, statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .

## Results

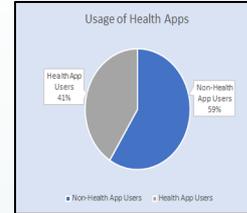


Figure 1:  
Study participants based on prior usage of health-related apps.

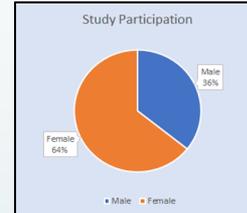


Figure 2:  
Study participants based on gender.

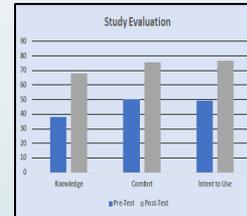


Figure 3:  
Study participants Pre/Post-test evaluations of comfort, knowledge & intent to use.

## Conclusion

- Providing educational sessions with hands-on demonstration and practice is an effective strategy to increase knowledge and comfort on the utilization of mobile health apps for health promotion activities.
- Prior to the educational sessions, the majority of participants (92.9%) reported using apps on their phones but only 41.1% used health related apps.
- After the educational sessions, participants reported they were more likely to use mobile health apps.
- Removing some of the common barriers to the utilization of mobile health apps increases the likelihood of their use and offers an accessible tool for health promotion activities to underserved populations in rural communities.

## Acknowledgements

- Study is an extension of a previous study entitled "Brief Educational Sessions to Promote Health App Use" by Higgins et al. (2019).
- Ionad Naomh Pradraig Community Center

## References Available Upon Request