

EMBARGO UNTIL:

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The University of Chicago's Ci3 receives NIH grant to design a mobile app to increase access to immediate postpartum contraception

Researchers and designers from Ci3, Resilient Games Studio, and Access Community Health Network partner to develop an app that aims to lengthen interpregnancy intervals in teens and young women.

(Chicago) The University of Chicago's Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation (Ci3) in Sexual and Reproductive Health was recently awarded a grant to pilot an app and toolkit designed to help young women ages 15-25 lengthen inter-pregnancy intervals (IPIs). Short IPIs - pregnancies within 18 months of a previous birth - were identified as an issue of national importance in Healthy People 2020's 10-year agenda for improving the nation's health.

The Patient-Centered Postpartum Contraceptive Toolkit was funded by the National Institutes of Health's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The project will be led by Ci3's founder and director, Dr. Melissa Gilliam in partnership with Resilient Games Studio, LLC, and Access Community Health Network's Center for Discovery and Learning, an NIH-funded, community-based research center.

"As this generation of digital natives comes of age, it is time to rethink and retool the clinical visit," said Gilliam. "According to one study, adolescents spend nine hours a day using technology, so a mobile app for postpartum contraceptive education is an obvious tool."

According to a 2015 National Vital Statistics Report from the CDC, shorter IPIs may affect the risk of pregnancy complications, such as preterm birth, low birthweight, and small gestational age. The National Survey of Family Growth reports that 29.3% of women have short IPIs, with the highest rates among teenagers ages 15-19 (57%), followed by women ages 20-29 (33%). With close to 40% of teen girls ages 15-19 having short IPIs, followed by 24.5 % of women ages 20-24, Chicago mirrors national rates. African-American teenagers in Chicago were more likely to have a short IPI (11.8%) than their Hispanic (8.6%) and white (8.1%) peers.

This project will be conducted in two phases. Though the final toolkit will serve all adolescents, the first phase will develop and test a prototype for African-American teen girls in Englewood, where 25% of adolescents have short IPIs, compared to 18.9% for Chicago as a whole. The full toolkit will be a multisystem, multimedia intervention for the prenatal and postpartum period that will include apps, training videos, algorithms, policies, patient educational materials, resources and research.

"This project is just the type of innovative, community-based research that we hoped to bring to the ACCESS Center for Discovery and Learning," said ACCESS' Director of Research Dani Lazar. "As we continue to tackle real health issues that are plaguing our communities, we must think differently and find ways to engage area residents in developing the right solutions that will work for that specific community."

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Founded in 2012, Ci3 is an award-winning research center at the University of Chicago. Ci3 envisions a world in which all youth emerge into adulthood with agency over their bodies and futures. As such, we are committed to empowering young people, conducting innovative research, and uncovering opportunities for policy and systemic change. Ci3 houses three labs: the Game Changer Chicago Design Lab, the Transmedia Story Lab, and the Design Thinking Lab. Through these labs, Ci3's interdisciplinary team of medical providers, public health scholars, policy researchers, designers, and artists create games, digital narratives, and interventions with and for youth. Developed with an eye towards scaling, each of our interventions can be implemented in settings across the Chicagoland area and beyond.

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