

A new tool for sparking nonjudgmental sexual and reproductive health conversations between adolescents and healthcare providers developed with adolescents using participatory design



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OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS AND PROVIDERS

OBJECTIVE

We conducted participatory design workshops with adolescents to iteratively test and refine a counseling tool to facilitate open, nonjudgmental conversations between clinicians and adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Adolescents and clinicians were engaged as human-centered designers to create a tool to facilitate sexual health counseling. We conducted two iterative prototyping workshops, and real and simulated patient visits to test the resulting tool. Formative research included: intercept interviews (n=50), focus groups (n=3), and semi-structured interviews (n=20). Participants included adolescents ages 14-18 (n=89) and clinicians (n=31).

RESULTS

Formative research indicated adolescents appreciate and desire medically-accurate sexual health information from clinicians, rather than trying to find quality information independently. However, fearing clinician judgment, adolescents often refrain from asking questions. Iterative prototyping guided the development of the counseling tool, as well as generated “design criteria” used to evaluate if the tool met the requirements adolescents indicated would be essential to the tool’s success. The resultant tool is *Cards on the Table*, a deck of 44 sexual questions for adolescents to explore with their providers. A progressive app version and implementation supports are currently under development in advance of a clinical study.

If you would like to be notified when *Cards on the Table* is available to the public, please sign up at hellogreenlightpro.org



Example cards from the deck

ANATOMY OF A CARD

INSTRUCTIONS ON DECK PACKAGING

DESIGN CRITERIA 1

Must illuminate all sexual health topics and let adolescents decide what they want to ask

Adolescents are often unaware of the range of sexual and reproductive health topics and often lack specific vocabulary to name what they may have questions about.

Presenting a full range of sexual health topics not only raises awareness about the different kinds of sexual health information, it allows adolescents to prioritize what information may be important to their bodies, lives, and aspirations.

“The cards brought up questions that I didn’t know I even had.”

—Adolescent participant

“I think providers don’t ask males about sexual and reproductive health as much because medicine and society is so focused on contraception.”

—Pediatric resident

DIRECTIONS

- 1 While you’re waiting to see your healthcare provider, flip through this deck of sexual health questions.
- 2 Pick up to three cards to ask or hand to your healthcare provider during your visit today.

CATEGORIES

- Puberty
- Gender & Sexuality
- Sexual Wellness
- Birth Control
- Pregnancy
- STIs & STDs
- General Wellness
- Relationships

DESIGN CRITERIA 2

Must support purposive exploration by signaling topics that may be personally relevant

Adolescents don’t want to miss an opportunity to educate themselves, yet it can be hard to figure out what information is important to them.

Categories allow adolescents to quickly identify topics, and navigate them in a personal, organized, and easy way.

“Some of the questions pinpointed exactly what I needed to ask but I didn’t want to... For me it was one question in particular that I just needed to know but I never had the courage to ask it. And so today I finally had the courage to be like, okay I need to ask. I need to talk about this.”

—Adolescent patient

FRONT OF CARD

DESIGN CRITERIA 3

Must build confidence of adolescents to navigate their own (sexual) healthcare

Adolescents recognize the expertise of healthcare providers and desire hearing medically accurate information directly from them.

Yet, many adolescents do not know they can take the lead, or sometimes fear asking questions during a patient visit.

Offering adolescents a set of questions invites them into a safe, nonjudgmental space where it is normal to ask questions, and helps to set expectations for future clinical interactions as they enter adulthood.

“You’re just, like, taking charge of what you’re going to talk about. It was great for me. I liked it.”

—Adolescent patient

“We have an assumption that young people don’t have questions or want to ask providers about them if they do.”

—Pediatrician



DESIGN CRITERIA 4

Visual design must show how to use the cards

“I like the symbols and the colors because they help me understand what the topic is about.”

—Adolescent participant

“I noticed the color coding, it stuck out to me, because I accidentally pulled one of the wrong cards, but I remembered the color of the card. So I was able to find it quickly.”

—Adolescent participant

Visual design must speak to adolescents and their peers

“I like the design. It makes me a little bit more excited about talking about it, rather than if it was just a boring photo.”

—Adolescent participant

“I like that the design makes me want to read more.”

—Adolescent participant

BACK OF CARD

DESIGN CRITERIA 5

Information must be right-sized and balanced

Adolescents desire medically accurate information, but often find the way it is usually communicated overwhelming and/or boring.

Instead, adolescents wish for bite-sized introductory content that is short, sweet, and incomplete—like an Instagram ad—to signal what they might want more information about, or may have incomplete information about, relative to sexual health topics.

“Questions... felt straight to the point not like the ones at school which are stupid.”

—Adolescent patient

“Cards are great because they are not overwhelming.”

—Adolescent patient

“The cards are small. This is enough.”

—Adolescent participant

BIRTH CONTROL

Emergency contraception is used to prevent pregnancy if birth control was not used or if there is unexpected exposure to semen from a loose, broken, or forgotten condom.

There are two types—pills and the copper IUD. They must be administered 3 to 5 days after semen exposure. Pills can be purchased, with or without a prescription, at a pharmacy or online, and can be taken without medical supervision. An IUD must be inserted by a healthcare provider.

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PROTOTYPE TESTING WITH ADOLESCENTS AND PROVIDERS

