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New Ci3 study finds that a “user-designed” mobile app is an informative avenue for contraceptive education and knowledge among young women

Chicago - A recent study published in Health Education & Behavior by researchers at the University of Chicago’s Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation (Ci3) in Sexual and Reproductive Health found that a waiting room mobile application for contraceptive education shows promise for increased knowledge of contraceptive options. The study also found that using a mobile application was an appropriate use of time spent while in the waiting before the clinic visit.

Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) namely the intrauterine device (IUD) and implant has been endorsed as a first-line contraceptive method for adolescents. However, rather than LARC, young African American and Latino women ages 15-24 are more likely to adopt short-acting forms of contraception such as condoms and birth control pills. While women should use whatever method they desire, it is important to lower barriers to access, such as lack of awareness or knowledge. In a prior study, inadequate time for counseling on LARC methods was seen as a barrier to LARC uptake. A waiting contraceptive counseling app was seen as a way of using waiting room downtime and complementing the clinical visit.

Recently published in the peer-reviewed journal, Health Education & Behavior, the article, [“Development of a Mobile App on Contraceptive Option for Young African American and Latina Women,”](#) describes a participatory approach to designing a contraceptive counseling app - “miPlan” - for use in a clinical setting. “miPlan” was designed by Ci3’s Game Changer Chicago Design Lab and a research team at the University of Chicago. This study demonstrates that mobile applications designed in conjunction with user populations may be effective at providing health information.

To ensure the app was patient-centered, the design team used user experience design in which African American and Latina patients collaborated with app developers and designers throughout the development process. In the fall of 2014, researchers showed the app prototype to patients as they waited for their appointment at a university-based gynecology clinic. Researchers learned that patients wanted images as well as the names of different contraceptive methods and that they wanted to learn about effectiveness rates, not failure rates. The app also featured short, less than one minute, videos about the implant and intrauterine device.

The app was then evaluated by 110 women as part of a larger randomized controlled trial. Participants were African American (73.1%) and Latino (26.9%) ages 15 to 24, median age 22 years. Almost all of the participants reported owning mobile phones and using mobile applications.

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The study found that:

- Almost all of the participants “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they liked the app (95.4%) and that it was easy to use (97.3%).
- Most (95.5%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the app taught them new things about birth control and that they would use the information in the future.
- A large majority of the participants reported that miPlan was an appropriate use of time spent before their clinic visit.
- Close to 89% (88.8) responded that they would use an app to learn about sexual and reproductive health outside of a clinic setting.

Mobile applications and other forms of digital media offer a scalable technology for patient education in a clinic setting and can be used to enhance subsequent discussions with a provider about contraceptive options.

To review the full publication, click [here](#). This research was supported by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Global Development and Population Program.

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About Ci3 at the University of Chicago

Established in 2012, [Ci3](#) is a research center the University of Chicago addressing the social and structural determinants of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. At Ci3, we envision a world in which all youth emerge into adulthood with agency over their bodies and futures. Ci3 houses three labs: [The Game Changer Chicago Design Lab](#); [The Transmedia Story Lab](#); and [The Design Thinking Lab](#). Within these labs, we create games and digital narratives, and design interventions with and for youth. Ci3 is committed to empowering young people, conducting innovative research, and uncovering opportunities for policy and systemic change.

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