Developing an mhealth intervention: Key challenges and lessons from Growing healthy

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Background
Mobile phone based (mhealth) interventions are becoming increasingly popular modes of delivering health behaviour interventions. There is however scant literature to guide researchers through the development process.

Aims
The aim of this paper is to share the key lessons learnt in the development of the Growing healthy program, a mhealth intervention targeting healthy infant feeding practices for socio-economically disadvantaged parents.

Methods
The Growing healthy program was developed over an 18 month period and consists of a purpose designed app and website.

Users receive 3 messages a week tailored to their baby’s age and current feeding method, linking users to the relevant information in the app or website.

The development of the program was informed by intervention mapping and involved four key stages shown below.

Findings – Key Lessons
• App design features are influenced by project timeline and budget, together with types of phones used by the target audience.
• Formative work in understanding the ‘app’ market place and preferences of end users is critical in designing an engaging mhealth intervention.
• Use of behaviour change theory is important in shaping intervention strategies and key app features.
• Push notifications need to be tested with end users to inform frequency, tone, and degree to which messages are tailored.
• Extensive user testing is required to enhance intervention usability and functionality.
• Consideration needs to be given to how data collection for research purposes is to be integrated into mhealth interventions to maximise response rates.

Conclusion
Developing mhealth interventions is a relatively new endeavour for physical activity and nutrition researchers and there is much to be learnt!

For more Information:
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