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Impact of mobile health (mhealth) in diabetic retinopathy awareness and eye care behavior among aboriginal women in saskatoon

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Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is an ocular complication of diabetes and the most common cause of blindness in Canada, especially among adults. In Canada, there is increasing the prevalence of diabetes in Indigenous women with an elevated risk of developing DR. Poor eye health literacy amongst other social determinants of health lead to late diagnosis and vision loss in persons living with diabetes. Low compliance to recommended annual diabetic eye screening which may be due to poor understanding of diabetic eye complications prompts the need to explore innovative ways to increase awareness and influence eye care use. The researchers examined factors that motivate and constrain Indigenous women with diabetes or at-risk of diabetes in Saskatoon, Canada from adopting healthy eye care behaviors and identified the changes in DR awareness and eye care behavior as a result of a mHealth education intervention. This is a mixed method before-and-after study and data was collected via sharing circles and surveys. Pre-intervention DR awareness and eye care behavior data was collected from participants. Thereafter, participants received daily diabetes-eye related education via mobile text messages for 12 weeks. Post-intervention, participants will be evaluated to determine the impact of the mHealth education on DR awareness and eye care behavior. The mHealth intervention is presently on-going. Results will be available in June 2018. We anticipate that the study will provide culturally appropriate eye care information to Indigenous women in order to empower them in making informed eye health choices and spur diabetes eye care behavior change.

Biography

Valerie O Umaefulam is a PhD candidate at the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan. She is an Optometrist and has a Public Health background. She has worked on various community eye health programs and mobile health programs/initiatives in Canada and Africa.

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