

4th World Congress on

MIDWIFERY AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

July 20-22, 2017 Melbourne, Australia

The Health-e Babies app for antenatal education: Feasibility for socially disadvantaged women

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Statement of the Problem: The use of mobile technology such as phone applications (apps) has been proposed as an efficient means of providing health and clinical information in a variety of healthcare settings. We developed the Health-e Babies app as an android smart phone application for pregnant women attending a tertiary hospital in a low socio-economic community, with the objective of providing pregnancy related health information for improved health outcomes. However, the pilot study had a poor participation rate with 77% (n=95) not completing the study requirements. These initial findings raised some very important issues in relation to the difficulties of engaging women with a pregnancy app and analyses the characteristics of the participants who did not complete the study requirements to identify potential barriers associated with the implementation of a pregnancy app.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This retrospective review of quantitative data collected via questionnaires completed at the commencement of the trial, related to the participant's communication technology use, confidence in knowing where to seek advice and mental health status.

Findings: All women were similar in terms of age, race and level of education. Of the 95 women (77%) who did not complete the trial, they were significantly more anxious as indicated by State Trait Anxiety Inventory ($p=0.000$ Student T-test) and more likely to be unemployed (50% vs 31%, $p=0.012$) compared to the group of women who completed the trial.

Conclusion: This study provides important information about the challenges associated with the implementation of a pregnancy app in a socially disadvantaged community, suggesting that social and mental health issues, financial constraints and technological ability can affect women's engagement with a mobile phone app. Women in disadvantaged circumstances may require assistance with engagement.

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