Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Positively Connected for Health (PC4H): Use of eHealth/mHealth tools to Improve Health of HIV+ Youth

Statement of Problem

Each year, there are approximately 50,000 new HIV infections. Young people ages 13-29 make up almost 40 percent of these new infections despite only accounting for one-third of the total population. Additionally, compared with adults, youth are two-to-four times less likely to achieve an undetectable viral load (indicating optimal control of HIV infection). Individuals can only achieve and maintain viral suppression, the goal of HIV treatment, if they take antiretroviral therapy (ART) every day at the same time with very little room for missing doses. If youth are able to engage in regular medical care and adhere to their medication, it will improve their personal health and well-being, help prevent transmission to others and, ultimately, guide their transition into healthy, productive adults.

Description

Positively Connected for Health (PC4H) is a Philadelphia-based innovative project that aims to improve health outcomes for youth living with HIV who do not have a suppressed viral load by using the following three distinct eHealth/mHealth interventions:

1. Iknowushould2, a CHOP social media campaign that encourages youth in Philadelphia to get HIV and STI testing
2. APPlify Youth Health, a Philadelphia FIGHT workshop that teaches young people how to utilize digital health literacy tools
3. A mobile health (mHealth) application, a CHOP and Drexel University app that works to improve medication adherence and engagement in care for adolescents and young adults living with HIV

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) funds this project and other similar programs across ten U.S. cities to determine how social media/technology interventions can help to improve the health of youth living with HIV.

PC4H will enroll youth ages 14-29 who are not virally suppressed and who are receiving care or services at CHOP and Philadelphia FIGHT. The project aims to:

1. Use the iknowushould2 campaign to identify HIV+ youth who are unaware of their status.
2. Determine acceptability and feasibility of the *APPlify Your Health* workshop with the medication adherence application by measuring eHealth literacy, workshop satisfaction and the medication adherence app satisfaction through questionnaires.
3. Determine efficacy of the medication adherence and engagement in care application for youth living with HIV by measuring app self-reported data on medication adherence and clinical outcomes (viral load, CD4 count) captured through laboratory testing at medical visits over an 18-month period.

Next Steps

The study teams will work with the funder's national evaluators, UCLA's Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center (ETAC), to evaluate the various sites' innovative social media methods designed to identify, link and retain youth and young adults living with HIV who are underserved, underinsured and hard to reach. The evaluation of the effectiveness of this mHealth/eHealth HIV-focused intervention will provide a foundation for future culturally competent, youth-centered models designed to improve digital health literacy, medication adherence and retention in care for marginalized youth either living with or at risk for HIV infection.

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Related Tools & Publications

Behavioral and Health Outcomes for HIV+ Young Transgender Women (YTW) Linked To and Engaged in Medical Care
Article
Apr 2015

Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Gender Non-Conforming Children and Adolescents
Evidence to Action Briefs
Dec 2015

Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Other Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth
Article
Dec 2016

Incidence of Syphilis Infection and Syphilis-related Care Utilization Among Adolescents and Young Adults Living with HIV
Article
Feb 2022

Longitudinal Viral Suppression Among a Cohort of Adolescents and Young Adults with Behaviorally Acquired Human Immunodeficiency Virus
Article
Sep 2017

Policy Perspective: Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Gender Nonconforming Children and Adolescents
Article
Apr 2016

Predictors of Internet Health Information Seeking Behaviors among Young Adults Living with HIV Across the United States
Article
Nov 2020

Telehealth’s Impact on Teen Care During COVID-19 in 200 Words
Blog Post
Jul 16, 2020

Young Transgender Women's Attitudes Toward HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis
Article

Jan 2017

“I Think That I Have a Good Understanding of How to Protect Myself:" A Qualitative Study About HIV Risk Perceptions Among Men and Gender Diverse Individuals Who Have Sex With Men
Article
Feb 2022
Related Projects

Understanding the Policy, Legal and Practice Barriers to Treating the Partners of Adolescents with Sexually Transmitted Infections
Adolescent Health & Well-Being

IKnowUShould2: A Campaign to Raise Awareness about Sexually Transmitted Infections among Youth in Philadelphia
Adolescent Health & Well-Being