

APPC Conference 2012:
Media and the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents
The Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania

Enhancing Opportunities for Positive Youth Development
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Technology and public health interventions

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* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting CiPHR for further information.

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Decoding how technology influences and can improve public health

Advantages of using technology

- Allows us to go where youth 'are' instead of expecting them to come to us
- Can tailor the intervention to the individual without losing program fidelity
- Overcomes barriers to uptake with which traditional interventions struggle (e.g., transportation; scheduling and time constraints)
- Exposes person to important health information anonymously
- Programs are scalable and cost effective (once developed)

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Disadvantages of using technology

- It's tempting to try to use technology for *everyone* in *every* case
- Requires self-motivation to first look for the information, and to subsequently come back to complete the intervention:
 - Follow-up rates (for online programs especially) are lower than those for in-person interventions
 - Need to think about *why* the young person would be self-interested in the health behavior change

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Disadvantages of using technology

- Ethical issues (e.g., identifying and referring youth in crisis; unintentional disclosure of tracking / usage data)
- High development costs make it difficult to get pilot data for larger trials
- It's challenging to determine what is a fad and what is transcendent (i.e., testing last year's Big Thing vs. anticipating trends and developing the program ahead of the curve so its ready and waiting)

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Technology in public health: CyberSenga



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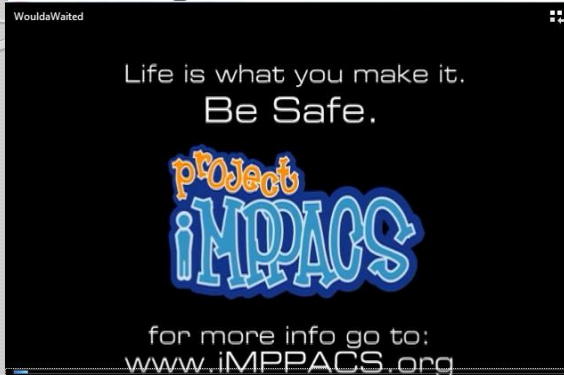
Technology in public health: SMS USA



Technology in public health: Additional examples

- Acosta: Mobile web-based psychosocial intervention for people in methadone maintenance treatment (R01DA029630)
- Belzer : cell phones reminders for adherence to HIV drugs among adolescents (5U01HD040463)
- Bull: text messaging-based HIV prevention program for Black and African American 16-20 year olds (5R21MH083318)
- Cornelius: using text messaging to deliver 'boosters' for an adolescent HIV prevention program (5R21NR011021)
- Olsen: text messaging to promote physical activity in adolescents (1R21HS018214)

Technology in public health: Don't forget traditional media



Conclusion

- Technology-based interventions combine the wide reach of mass media campaigns with the individual, tailored approach of clinical interventions.
- At the same time, technology is not a panacea and should not be seen as the go-to answer for all prevention and intervention efforts.
- Understanding when, why, and how to use technology is integral for today's public health professionals.

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