

# How effective is a smartphone app in teaching sexual health to teen girls?

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Across the globe, there is increased focus on developing interventions related to comprehensive sexual health education for adolescents, with the ultimate goal of combatting unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. The challenge has been how best to reach this audience in a way that is meaningful, relevant and easy to understand.

A research team led by Lynae M. Brayboy, MD, reproductive endocrinologist in the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island and at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, found that a smartphone application vs. traditional methods can potentially connect teenage girls to more information about sexual health. The research, entitled "Girl Talk: A Smartphone Application to Teach Sexual Health Education to Adolescent Girls," was recently published in the *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*. The article was co-authored by Carol Wheeler, MD, also of Women & Infants/Brown University.

"We found that a smartphone application is a feasible sexual health educational tool that is appealing to teenage girls," said Dr. Brayboy. "In fact, our participants recommended the application as a valuable resource to learn about comprehensive sexual health."

For their research, Dr. Brayboy and her team recruited 39 girls ages 12 to 17 from Rhode Island to participate in a two-phase prospective study. In phase one, 22 girls assessed a sexual health questionnaire in focus groups. In phase two, 17 girls with iPhones used the Girl Talk

application for two weeks and answered the revised sexual health questionnaire and interview questions before and after the application use. The participants' responses to the sexual health questionnaire, interviews and time viewing the application were used to determine feasibility and desirability of Girl Talk.

Dr. Brayboy explained that Girl Talk was used on average for 48 minutes during participants' free time on weekends, generally in 10 to 15 minute intervals. The reported usefulness of Girl Talk as a sexual health application increased significantly from baseline (35.3%) to follow-up (94.1%). "More than three-quarters of the participants were exposed to sexual health education before using Girl Talk, but 94.1% of participants stated that the application provided new and/or more detailed information than health classes."

Dr. Brayboy and her team will be seeking opportunities to perform additional trials to determine if Girl Talk improves sexual health knowledge, increases contraception usage and decreases [sexually transmitted infections](#) and unplanned pregnancy.

**More information:** *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, [www.jpagonline.org/article/S10...-3188\(16\)30092-4/pdf](http://www.jpagonline.org/article/S10...-3188(16)30092-4/pdf)

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