

Abstract Title: A Qualitative Examination of Experiences using mHealth/eHealth for Weight Loss

Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina

Authors: Destiny Byrd; Caroline G. Dunn, MS, RD/LDN; Alycia Boutte, MPH; Gabrielle Turner-McGrievy, PhD, MS, RD

Objective: Current estimates are that 69% of US adults are classified as overweight or obese. eHealth/mHealth have potential for significant impact as rates of smartphone use remain high, including using technology to access health information. eHealth/mHealth may provide low cost, effective, accessible, and scalable approaches to obesity treatment and prevention. The purpose of this research is to qualitatively evaluate experiences of adults (≥ 18 years) who used eHealth/mHealth to successfully facilitate weight loss (≥ 2 kg).

Methods: Twenty-one individuals were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews about their weight-loss experience. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. NVivo software and a phenomenological approach were used to analyze interview transcriptions and to identify themes.

Results: Participants reported using tools to track behaviors including diet, physical activity, and sleep to facilitate weight loss. Most participants learned about their tool through friends, family, and ads on TV/social media. Participants identified the most important functions of their tool as providing feedback, data, competition, and accountability. Outcomes of tool use included increased physical activity, improved diet quality, weight-loss, and increased behavioral self-awareness. Barriers to use included tracking fatigue and forgetfulness/inconsistent tracking. Many also suggested using several tools at once for optimal weight-loss and to improve health, instead of a single eHealth tool. The most popular tools were the FitBit and MyFitnessPal.

Conclusion: This study reveals that eHealth/mHealth tools can assist in behavior tracking that may lead to weight-loss. More research should be done to explore specific aspects of these tools that facilitate weight-loss and encourage continued use.

Conflict of Interest: None

Funding Disclosure: This research is partially funded by a grant from the University of South Carolina Office of Undergraduate Research, awarded to Destiny Byrd.