

Design preferences and characteristics of a website for monitoring HIV medication adherence in Peru

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Abstract and objective

The objective of this paper is to document design preferences and characteristics of a website monitoring the HIV medication adherence of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The website is part of an mHealth solution that combines the use of short messaging services and the Internet to improve adherence to antiretroviral therapy. We conducted a qualitative study with adult PLWHA in a community-based clinic in Lima, Peru using focus groups. 26 HIV-positive individuals participated in four focus groups (20 men, 6 women). The participants reacted positively to the website and specified that they wanted the website to be confidential, socially interactive and easy to use. It was also important to participants that the website contain a motivational pet or character. There was no clear consensus on the aesthetic features of the website. This study suggests that PLWHA in this setting desire a confidential, easy-to-use, socially interactive website with animated characters to assist both their health care providers and themselves in monitoring their HIV medication adherence.

Keywords:

HIV, Adherence, Website, Focus groups, mHealth, Peru.

Methods

Participants were recruited at Via Libre, a community-based clinic in Lima, Peru that serves HIV-positive individuals. Four focus groups were conducted at the clinic. Individuals were required to be HIV-positive adults who were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) and owned a cell phone. The focus group guide was adapted from previous formative work [1]. Computer prototypes were used to evaluate various aspects of the website (Cell-POS) in all focus groups. Focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed. Data were entered into Atlas.ti version 5.2. Two different Spanish-speaking researchers (WHC, DAQ) coded transcripts independently using a content analysis approach. All participants signed an informed consent prior to participation in the study.

Results

During March-April 2008, 26 PLWHA (20 men, 6 women; mean age 37 years, SD 8.5) participated in focus groups at the

Via Libre Clinic. All participants (12 heterosexual, 14 gay) were on ART at the time of recruitment and participation. The majority of participants were frequent users of the Internet (42% daily, 23% 1-3 times/week). The participants reacted positively to the website and specified certain characteristics they wanted it to have (such as being confidential, socially interactive and easy to use). Some of the participants expressed concern about the possibility of including explicit references to HIV/AIDS on the homepage. They thought such references could lead to inadvertent disclosure of their seropositive status to others. It was also important to participants that the website contain a motivational pet or character. There was no clear consensus on the aesthetic features of the website.

Conclusion

This study suggests that HIV/AIDS patients want a confidential, easy-to-use, socially interactive website with animated characters to assist both their health care providers and themselves in monitoring their HIV medication adherence.

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Reference

- [1] Curioso WH, Kurth AE. Access, use and perceptions regarding Internet, cell phones and PDAs as a means for health promotion for people living with HIV in Peru. *BMC Med Inform Decis Mak.* 2007 Sep 12;7:24.

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