

Reaching Out Through Mobile Messaging

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The Health Sciences Library of Drexel University collaborated with a multidisciplinary team from Drexel's College of Nursing and Health Professions and the iSchool to design and deliver text messages to women attending pre-natal classes at an urban Federally Qualified Health Center in Philadelphia. Building on a previous survey indicating that the majority of young women served by the Health Center accessed the Internet through their cell phones, librarians selected specific websites to provide information tailored to the topics of the pre-natal classes. The team then composed supportive text messages that were sent twice weekly utilizing an automated text messaging service.

Key Features of the Project:

- Collaboration among health sciences librarians, health professionals and IS/LIS faculty

- Outreach to health disparities population (urban Federally Qualified Health Center)

- Adaptation of text messaging to include links to websites selected to support health education

Lessons Learned:

- Although most patients possessed Internet-enabled cell phones, their numbers changed frequently, requiring constant monitoring

- Balancing demonstration with research in a cross disciplinary environment can be challenging

- Tying the messages to a pre-determined curriculum facilitated identifying relevant information resources

Conclusions:

Automated sending of messages to a target audience is feasible and an attractive form of outreach. Cross disciplinary collaboration provides opportunities for librarians to expand their perspective and augment their experience. Health sciences librarians' skills in identifying the exact part of the website to point to is essential, as is understanding the key points to be communicated to the audience. The library of messages used to support Centering Pregnancy is available by contacting the project team leader at pdalrymple@drexel.edu

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