

June 21-22, 2018
Paris, FranceJ Nurs Health Stud 2018, Volume: 3
DOI: 10.21767/2574-2825-C3-009

BREASTFEEDING MOBILE HEALTH APPLICATIONS: AN EVALUATION STUDY

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Background: The rapid and ongoing growth in information technology has created many applications for health and wellbeing, including breastfeeding. However, due to lack of rigorous evaluation of these applications, nurses, midwives and other health professionals are unable to recommend any specific breastfeeding application in supporting women towards long-term breastfeeding behaviour. The aim of this study was to evaluate the quality of the breastfeeding applications based on the persuasive system design model.

Method: An online search was conducted on Apple store in May 2017. The search strategy included the following keywords: breastfeeding, lactation and breast milk. Only free applications that were in English language, targeted on breastfeeding education and installed on iOS version 9.3.5 were included.

Results: 11 applications met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. The findings of the study demonstrated that all of the selected breastfeeding applications used some features from the persuasive system design model. But, the key persuasive features including tailoring, praise, award, and social support that could augment human to computer dialogue were not identified in many of the applications. The study also demonstrated the lack of quality check systems from credible regulatory bodies seen in the included applications.

Conclusion: The findings of the study demonstrate the need for improvement in designing breastfeeding applications based on the persuasive system design model. The study highlights the need for a quality check system for breastfeeding applications where nurses, midwives and other health professionals can advise the women to choose a reliable source to support their decision in breastfeeding.

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