

Sexual health promotion for young people delivered via digital media: a scoping review

Julia Bailey,^{1*} Sue Mann,² Sonali Wayal,¹
Rachael Hunter,³ Caroline Free,⁴ Charles Abraham⁵
and Elizabeth Murray¹

¹e-Health unit, Research Department of Primary Care and Population Health, University College London, London, UK

²Camberwell Sexual Health Centre, King's College Hospital, London, UK

³PRIMENT Clinical Trials Unit, Research Department of Primary Care and Population Health, University College London, London, UK

⁴Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK

⁵Medical School, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

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Many young people experience problems such as sexually transmitted infections and abuse in relationships. Young people in the UK may not get enough sexual health education at school or through health services. We wanted to find out whether or not mobile phones and the internet are good ways to provide sexual health education.

In our research we:

- looked at hundreds of research papers, articles and blogs
- interviewed young people (13–24 years old) and parents of teenagers
- talked to doctors, nurses, teachers and technology experts.

We found that:

- young people want to know more about sex and relationships, including sexual pleasure
- there are interesting ways to learn about sexual health online, such as quizzes, videos, games and virtual worlds
- there are lots of sexual health information websites and mobile phone apps, but most do not give personalised advice
- interactive programmes are effective for learning sexual health facts and can also increase safer sex
- programmes can help people to make decisions or solve problems by giving personalised advice
- programme developers should always involve young people
- programmes that use psychology are the best at encouraging people to make changes to their lives
- not all schools or clinics are ready or willing to provide sexual health information online
- we need to find out the best designs for websites and apps, including how to reach disadvantaged youth, how to change behaviour, what the costs are and which work best in schools and clinics.

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