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

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Declared competing interests of authors: Julia Bailey, Elizabeth Murray and Caroline Free have developed interactive digital interventions and lead programmes of research to evaluate interventions. None of the authors has received fees or sponsorship from organisations which stand to make a profit from the development and implementation of digital interventions.

Published November 2015
DOI: 10.3310/phr03130
Plain English summary

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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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 11/3009/04. The contractual start date was in March 2013. The final report began editorial review in September 2014 and was accepted for publication in June 2015. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health.

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