

The Men's Safer Sex project: intervention development and feasibility randomised controlled trial of an interactive digital intervention to increase condom use in men

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Plain English summary

The Men's Safer Sex (MenSS) project

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Plain English summary

The Men's Safer Sex website gives advice about sexual health and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections (STIs). We wanted to find out whether or not the website is useful for men in sexual health clinics and how best to run research. Men signed up for the study on an iPad® (Apple Inc., Cupertino, CA, USA) in clinic waiting rooms and allocated to:

1. The 'no website' group: asked to complete online surveys via e-mail 3, 6 and 12 months later.
2. The 'website' group: asked to look at the Men's Safer Sex website while they were waiting and to then fill in online surveys 3, 6, 9 and 12 months later.

We checked men's clinic records after 1 year and also interviewed 11 men and nine members of staff. We found that:

- men were happy to do online research
- staff and patients felt that a sexual health website is a good idea
- staff asked men to join the study, rather men registering on iPads on their own
- there were a lot of technical problems
- one-third of the experimental group did not actually see the Men's Safer Sex website
- privacy and confidentiality is very important
- only half of the men filled in the online surveys
- we collected useful information on STIs and costs from medical records
- there were fewer infections in the group who received the Men's Safer Sex website (9% vs. 13%), but this difference might have happened by chance
- the website did not seem to cause any harm and men thought it could be helpful.

The next steps are to work out how to solve practical and technical problems before health promotion websites can be tested and used in NHS settings.

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