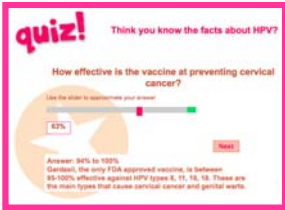


HELPING PREVENT THE SPREAD OF STDs WITH *Fact Check: HPV* A NOVEL FACEBOOK APPLICATION

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Background:

- ✦ Social networking sites offer new ways of encouraging healthy behavior using existing social relationships. Over 75% of young adults have a profile page.
- ✦ People often trust information from friends who know them best and share common concerns and interests.
- ✦ Sharing information about stigmatized diseases, such as STDs, through social networks can be sensitive and problematic.
- ✦ Adolescents and young adults are a difficult to reach population




Findings:

- ✦ 1,022 downloads in 3 months (90% female)
- ✦ 40% of users were single; 25% married; and 34% in a relationship
- ✦ 171 users (16.7%) uninstalled app as suggested for users who want to remain anonymous
- ✦ Of the users who finished the quiz, 425 chose "Not now", 60 Chose "Invite through Facebook" (i.e., Regular) and 33 chose "Invite Friends Anonymously" [see box below]
- ✦ Average invites sent per Regular inviter was 10, compared to an average of 3 invites sent by Anonymous inviters
- ✦ Acceptance rate of Anonymous email invites was much higher than acceptance rate of regular invites [see box below]

Research Goals:

- ✦ Increase awareness of and promote HPV prevention and vaccination, particularly among young women.
- ✦ Develop and pilot a novel application that allows people to anonymously share information about HPV with friends on social networking sites.
- ✦ Relate knowledge of HPV to demographic characteristics and social network position.
- ✦ Evaluate effectiveness of various marketing/promotional strategies to drive users to *Fact Check: HPV*
- ✦ Assess interest in anonymous invites on social networking sites

Limitations:

Due to new constraints that Facebook implemented during the project period, users can no longer invite friends to download an application anonymously. The only way we could provide for anonymity was to give users the option to send an anonymous email. Obviously, this is a barrier to sharing the application anonymously, but it at least allowed us to track how many users were interested in this option by clicking on it.

Discussion:

This project demonstrated the viability of using Facebook applications as a platform for education about stigmatized conditions, such as other STDs, HIV, addiction, and mental illness, as the approach embodied in *Fact Check: HPV* allows anonymity without losing the trust embedded in existing social networks. The higher than expected acceptance rate of anonymous invites, even though they were sent via email suggests the potential of this novel dissemination approach.

Collecting data via a quiz on social networking sites allows researchers to relate one's social network position to one's knowledge, behavior, and attitudes. This has significant implications for identifying thought leaders and promoting healthy behavior through existing social networks.

