

Focus on pre-pregnancy care



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FAST TRACK

The most efficacious pre-pregnancy care apps offer embedded references to more detailed resources for use when complexities arise during consultation

Improving maternal morbidity and mortality begins prior to conception. Numerous modifiable and nonmodifiable factors—lifestyle behaviors, chronic medical conditions, medications, immunizations, prior pregnancy events—have been shown to improve pregnancy outcomes if they are reviewed, identified, and optimized before conception.

Laying a solid foundation for a healthy pregnancy requires a comprehensive approach to patient counseling. However, the national Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS; a surveillance program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) data from 2014 show that only about 20% of women receive counseling on at least 5 out of 11 healthy lifestyle behaviors and prevention strategies before pregnancy. The ability to leverage technology-enabled smart device applications can provide clinicians with immediate access to information necessary to address with patients at a preconception visit. Apps built specifically for physicians offer a convenient, thorough, and peer-vetted reference that can increase the efficiency and quality of consultation in a busy practice.

Pre-pregnancy care app considerations

When applying the ACOG-recommended rubric (see page 30) to evaluate the quality of an app targeted to address preconception counseling, the accuracy and objectivity of the content, as well as the app's ease of use, are vital characteristics to consider, and these criteria should score 4 out of 4 on the rubric.

Several apps offer suggestions on how to address important components of health, including counseling and intervention strategies and evidence-based recommendations. The most efficacious apps offer embedded references to more detailed resources for use when complexities inevitably arise during consultation. Truly comprehensive pre-pregnancy care requires clinicians to take a step beyond the review of patients' medications and comorbidities. It is therefore helpful to implement point-of-care apps that prompt evaluation of the often-overlooked aspects of pre-pregnancy counseling, including risk of interpersonal violence and infectious diseases, occupational exposures, and immunization status.

Physician-focused pre-pregnancy apps that provide reminders, prompts, and strategies for addressing a comprehensive set of health components prior to conception can be valuable tools to incorporate into both educational environments and busy practices to address maternal morbidity and mortality. ●



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