

Access, Care and Empowerment (ACE) mobile app for people who inject drugs in Western Australia

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Background/Approach:

The Western Australian Government Methamphetamine Action Plan (MAP) Taskforce recommended that the Department of Health promotes awareness of needle and syringe programs (NSPs) to consumers (people who inject drugs).

Analysis/Argument:

Factors including stigma and discrimination and limited awareness of available services can reduce access to health and social services for consumers.

Mobile app-based interventions can provide quick and easy access to targeted health information, allowing app users to be highly engaged in changing health-related behaviours.

Outcome/Results:

Stakeholder (n=11) and consumer (n=122) consultations informed the development of the Access, Care and Empowerment (ACE) app launched in December 2020. The app provides information to consumers including NSP locations and opening hours, safe injecting practices, blood-borne viruses, vein care, overdose information, self-referral to alcohol and other drug (AOD) agencies, and self-care strategies.

Stakeholders (n=13) and consumers (n=9) also participated in formative evaluation of the ACE app using an adapted version of the Mobile App Rating Scale. Usability testing with consumers involved a 'think aloud' walk-through exercise.

Two-thirds of responses to the survey questions had above average ratings. Findings will be used to develop recommendations to improve usability of the ACE app.

Between July and August 2021, 26 survey responses were collated in further evaluation. Nearly half of respondents expressed interest in using the app, and those who are using the app have found it useful for harm reduction information and access to NSPs and NSEPs.

Conclusions/Applications:

The app has been promoted via posters and promotional cards distributed to stakeholders in the sexual health, AOD, medical and pharmacy sectors. Over an eleven-month period, there has been 423 downloads. An incidental finding is that the app also provides a tool for health workers to provide information for consumers.

Further promotion and evaluation will continue to raise awareness of the app and encourage downloads.

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