

Needs Assessment for a Mobile Text Messaging Intervention for SNAP Eligible Adults

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Poster #P92

ABSTRACT

Background: Mobile text messaging intervention is a promising method for improving health promotion and behavior change. Little is known about feasibility and strategies for text messaging interventions targeted to low-income adults.

Objective: The objective of this study was to explore opinions about feasibility, tone, and content for the development of a texting campaign for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) eligible adults to encourage drinking more water and drinking less sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

Study Design, Setting and Participants: A qualitative research design was used to elicit the opinions of SNAP-Ed eligible individuals living in the state of Georgia. Using a convenience sample, 13 former SNAP-Ed direct education participants (84.6% female, 69.2% African American) were recruited by text message and email and participated in 4 focus groups and 1 in-depth interview through Zoom. Interviews focused on participants' texting behavior, current beverage consumption, and proposed content of text messages.

Measurable Outcome/ Analysis: Focus group interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded to establish emergent themes using constant comparative method and Atlas.ti.

Results: Participants indicated text messaging would be an affordable, desirable, and comfortable way to receive information about nutrition and health. Participants expressed a desire to increase water consumption for themselves due to existing health concerns and wanted to reduce the number of SSBs they drank per day, despite currently drinking SSBs daily. The price and taste of water and unsweetened beverages were reported as the most common barriers to making healthier drink choices. Participants preferred content relevant to their lives (including health issues and abilities), and desired opportunities to build upon their previous knowledge with action-oriented, interactive, and engaging text messages.

Conclusions and Implications: Text messaging is a feasible method to provide nutrition education to SNAP-Ed eligible adults. The findings from this study will inform and guide a new University of Georgia SNAP-Ed text messaging intervention.

BACKGROUND

- **Mobile text messaging intervention** is a promising method for improving health promotion and behavior change.
 - Mobile Health (mHealth) is a developing field which describes the delivery of health care through cell phones, including text messages.
 - Text messages have the potential to support behavior change as a widely accessible and relatively inexpensive health intervention (Cole-Lewis & Kershaw, 2010).
 - Using text messages to deliver nutrition education is a potentially viable and cost-effective avenue for mHealth interventions targeted to low-income adults (Neuenschwander, Abbott, & Mobley, 2012).
- **Nutrition Education** efforts are beginning to use text messaging in various health interventions (Funderburk et al., 2018; Saldana & Pendleton, 2020; Speirs, et al., 2016).
- However, little is known about feasibility and strategies for text messaging interventions targeted to low-income adults.
- This **Needs Assessment** was conducted to inform the development of a new pilot text messaging campaign for SNAP-Ed eligible, low-income adults in the state of Georgia to encourage drinking more water and drinking less SSBs

SNEB Nutrition Educator Competencies: 9.2; 9.3; 9.4

STUDY OBJECTIVE

- To explore opinions about feasibility, tone, and content for the development of a texting campaign for SNAP-Ed eligible adults to encourage drinking more water and drinking less SSBs.

METHODS

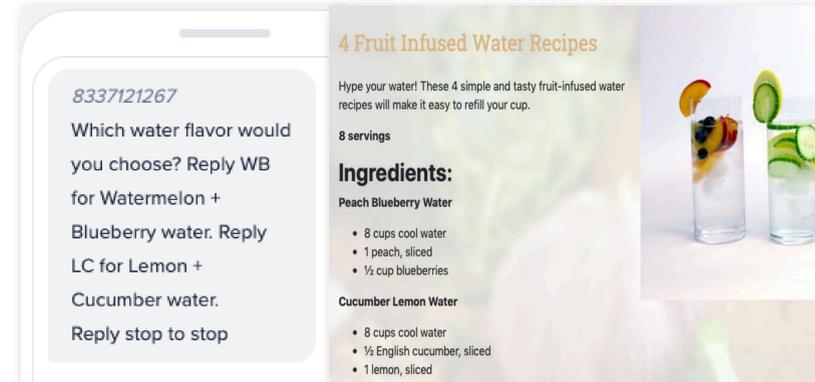
- **Study Design, Settings, Participants**
 - A qualitative research design was used to elicit the opinions of SNAP-Ed eligible individuals living in the state of Georgia.
 - Using a convenience sample, 13 former SNAP-Ed direct education participants (84.6% female, 69.2% African American) were recruited by text message and email and participated in 4 focus groups and 1 in-depth interview through Zoom (due to COVID-19 pandemic).
 - A short online survey to gather demographic information, current texting behavior, and beverage consumption was also administered to research participants (n=13)
 - Participants ranged in age from 26-70, with most identifying as 55 or older.
 - Participants were recruited from Clarke, Fulton, and Lowndes County in Georgia, a mixture of urban and rural counties.
 - Participants reported receiving various types of public assistance, most commonly Food Stamps/ SNAP (See *Table 1*).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Sample (N=13)

Characteristics	n (%)
Female	11 (84.6%)
Black or African American	9 (69.2%)
Public Assistance Participation	
Food Stamps/ SNAP	10 (76.9%)
Medicaid	7 (53.8%)
Free or Reduced Price Lunch	2 (15.4%)

- **Interviews and focus groups** focused on participants' texting behavior, current beverage consumption, and proposed content of text messages.
- **Sample questions** included:
 - Tell me about your text messaging and mobile data plan.
 - Tell me about what beverages you choose to drink each day. What influences your choices?
 - How confident do you feel about your ability to make healthy drink choices to improve your future health?
 - What are the biggest barriers you face to improving your health?
 - What kinds of text messages would be helpful to support you or your family to make healthy drink choices?
- Participants were shown **sample text messages and images from linked blog posts** and asked to provide their opinions and ideas to improve the campaign development (See *Figure 1*).
- **Analysis**
 - Focus group interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded to establish emergent themes using constant comparative method and Atlas.ti.

Figure 1. Sample Text Message and Blog Image for Focus Groups and Interviews



The study protocol was approved by the University of Georgia IRB STUDY00000941, ID# MOD00007943

RESULTS

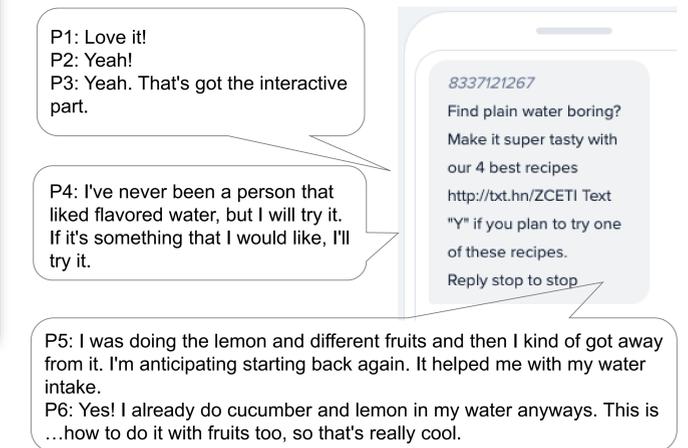
- **Feasibility**
 - Participants indicated text messaging would be an **affordable, desirable, and comfortable** way to receive information about nutrition and health.
 - Participants reported **no limitations** on the number of texts they could receive or send across a given month.
 - Participants expressed interest in receiving texts related to food and nutrition **multiple times per week** as the information as relevant and useful.
- Participants expressed a **desire to increase water consumption** for themselves due to existing health concerns.
- Participants expressed a **desire to reduce the number of SSBs they drank per day**, despite currently drinking SSBs daily.
- **Content and Tone**
 - The **price and taste of water** and unsweetened beverages were reported as the most common barriers to making healthier drink choices.
 - **Positive reaction towards water recipes with an action item**, such as texting back a short response about favorite recipe or clicking a link to a blog (See *Figure 2*).
- Participants preferred **content that was relevant to their lives** (including health issues and abilities), and desired opportunities to build upon their previous knowledge with **action-oriented, interactive, and engaging text messages**.
 - Including recipes, pictures and images with playful humor, links to blogs, short videos, short question and answer, and games.
- Participants expressed a desire to be **“cheered on” with a positive tone**.

P7: I would like, since it is going to be texting...**interactivity** that they could do...have them send it back to you...and then they get a response back with some **positive** message.

P8: That's exactly what I'm talking about. Sometimes it's hard...no matter what your good thoughts and applications that you're using, life is hard. **We can all use a pat on the back** for doing things that we know are right.

RESULTS, CONT'D

Figure 2. Participant Reactions to Sample Text Messages



CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Text messaging is a feasible method to provide nutrition education to SNAP-Ed eligible adults.
- The findings from this study will inform and guide a new University of Georgia SNAP-Ed text messaging intervention and part of a larger statewide SNAP-Ed Social Marketing intervention in Georgia.

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