

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AS A PROMISING TOOL FOR HEALTH RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND Mobile technology has revolutionized the way that behavioral scientists collect, store, and analyze data (Press, 2011). Recent literature has begun to point out the effectiveness of this technology for research in health scenarios (Miller, 2011). Therefore, researchers need to continue exploring the use of specific mobile technology and its relevance to the study of health related issues, particularly physician/patient interactions.

PURPOSE The purpose of our study was to document the behavioral manifestations of HIV/AIDS-related stigma in physician/patient interactions.

METHODS In order to achieve the aims of this study, a sequential mix method approach using focus groups and standardized patient technology was implemented. The qualitative phase included 9-focus group composed of 66 participants with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. A qualitative analysis using iAnnotate-application on the iPad allowed the development of a behavioral manifestation of HIV/AIDS-related Stigma Inventory (BMHASI). The quantitative phase was based on three HIV/AIDS case simulations, which generated 91 video recordings of patient/physician interactions, and the administration of a previously validated scale to assess HIV/AIDS-related stigma attitudes. The stigma scales were completed in vivo by medical students using the iSurvey application on the iPad. Standardized patients also completed the BMHASI. In the third phase, six researchers use the BMHASI developed on iSurvey to evaluate the 91 medical interactions between the medical students and standardized patients.

RESULTS The preliminary analysis identified eight stigmatizing behaviors manifested by medical students during simulated interactions including: avoid shaking hands to the patient, avoid physical contact needed to perform physical examination required by medical protocol, and excessive physical distance.

CONCLUSIONS The iPad is an emergent and valuable research tool for the behavioral sciences field with great potential for documenting socially stigmatized interactions in the health scenario.