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Assessing the Usability of a Self-Administered Smartphone-Based Treatment System for Alcohol Dependence

New Orleans, LA - A wide gap exists between the number of individuals needing alcohol abuse treatment and the number actually receiving it, largely due to treatment accessibility and the stigma of attending alcohol treatment. Smartphone technology provides the opportunity to deliver psychosocial interventions in real time (whenever and wherever it is needed) at low cost, and thus holds potential to provide help to many people who otherwise would not receive treatment.

With a grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), researchers at the University of Alaska Anchorage developed and tested a smartphone-based treatment for alcohol dependence, the Location-Based Monitoring and Intervention System for Alcohol Use Disorders (LBMI-A). The LBMI-A delivers seven different treatment modules including; 1) assessment of alcohol use patterns and consequences with accompanying feedback, 2) high risk location monitoring and alerts using GPS technology, 3) supportive person selection and connectivity, 4) managing cravings, 5) managing life problems, 6) pleasurable activity selection and scheduling, and 7) productive communication strategies. The LBMI-A also assesses alcohol use and cravings in vivo, provides immediately accessible tools to manage drinking-related issues and on-going feedback reports on alcohol use and related triggers. The LBMI-A was pilot tested with 28 participants, ranging in age from 22 to 45, who used an LBMI-A enabled HTC Tilt 2 smartphone for six weeks.

In a Rapid Communications Poster on Saturday, April 14, 2012, at the Society of Behavioral Medicine's Annual Meeting, Dr. Patrick Dulin will be on hand to discuss results of the LBMI-A project pertaining to the participants report of the usability of the system, which LBMI-A features participants reported to be most helpful, and suggestions for enhancing user-interface qualities of smartphone systems designed to target alcohol use disorders. A description of the on-going LBMI-A study, including the effectiveness of the LBMI-A system in comparison with a web based intervention for alcohol use will also be provided.

The Society of Behavioral Medicine is a multidisciplinary organization of clinicians, educators, and scientists dedicated to promoting the study of the interactions of behavior with biology and the environment and the application of that knowledge to improve the health and well being of individuals, families, communities, and populations. www.sbm.org

This study was presented during the 2012 Annual Meeting and Scientific Session of the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) from April 11-14 in New Orleans, LA. However, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of the SBM.

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