ACOG PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE SERIES ON PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE

Focus on obesity

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Obesity affects approximately 30% of American women, and while it is easy to diagnose, it is often difficult to address with our patients. Healthy eating and regular physical activity are the time-tested ways to achieve and maintain an appropriate weight.

For women with moderate obesity, leveraging technology is a great way to help them sensibly achieve weight loss. To evaluate the quality of a mobile app targeted to address obesity, it is particularly important to consider an app's usefulness, functionality, and design. Clinicians can evaluate these elements with the use of the ACOG-recommended rubric (see page 30), which provides criteria for judging usefulness, accuracy, authority, objectivity, timeliness, functionality, design, security, and value.

Obesity app considerations

A particularly valuable app feature that rates high on the usefulness measure is the capability for real-time motivational guidance that encourages the user to meet her daily goals. The ability to quickly and accurately scan and upload food items to an app and quantify portions using common comparative illustrations for measurement would give an app a high score on functionality. Coveted design features to enhance the user's experience, such as syncing real time with wearable devices and catering to both visual and text learners, increase the value of an app.

In addition, an app with the combined features of a personal dietitian and a fitness trainer can employ techniques to encourage healthy eating and physical activity to self-monitor food intake and exercise. Features that calculate the user's calorie level based on age, sex, height, and activity and offer a personalized dashboard to track carbohydrates, proteins, and fat breakdown (including nutrients and water intake) also can increase effectiveness. These features engage users to become more motivated toward an active lifestyle to balance food intake.

By incorporating apps that combine behavioral strategies with individualization, community presence, and feedback, we can successfully partner with our patients to address obesity. ●

FAST TRACK

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Developed in collaboration with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists