Discussion Post – 10/26

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Chronic pain affects more Americans each year than cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer combined. Veterans are disproportionately affected by this illness, with recent studies suggesting anywhere from 44 to 60% of Veterans are affected. This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of *Health eRide: Your Journey to Managing Pain,* a mobile pain self-management program for veterans. This program offers a variety of strategies for veterans to try out based on their stage of change and also focuses on stress management and healthy sleep. In order to increase engagement with the user, the program has text messaging and social networking aspects to further drive commitment. A pilot test of the program was run with 69 participating veterans, who each completed a baseline assessment and then spent 30 days following the program. They completed an intervention session, had access to additional activities based on their corresponding stage of change, and had the option of receiving tailored text messages. Following this 30 day period, they completed a post-assessment to measure the impact.

Results of the pilot test showed there was significant reductions in pain and pain impact, as well as some reduction in symptoms of PTSD. Furthermore, there was a significant increase in the percentage of participants who were in the action or maintenance stage for adopting pain self-management. The majority of participants felt that they had achieved some level of improvement. However, it is important to note that only 44 of the 69 original veterans in the pilot-test finished the post-test assessment to measure the impact. The other 25 presumably did not complete the 30 day program.

I was not surprised by the results, given it’s a fairly small sample size and a brief time period (only 30 days). I would expect that participants would find some level of improvement initially, given that most of them probably weren’t utilizing effective strategies to manage their pain beforehand. However, I would want to see a longer study to really gauge the impact of this program. 30 days just seems way too short to gauge a self-management program. One of the biggest issues with self-management programs are that it’s really up to the individual to stay committed to it. This study lasted only 30 days and already 25 of the 69 participants didn’t complete it. That’s concerning to me – as self-management programs need to be engaging enough to keep participants involved and commited to the program for much longer than just 30 days.