



At-home HIV/STI testing? There's an app for that.

The Takeaway

The MyChoices study evaluated whether a tailored, theory-driven mobile app increased HIV testing and PrEP use among young men who have sex with men (YMSM).

Among a sample of 60 participants, participants using the MyChoices app were

22% more likely to have an HIV test over a 6 month period.¹



Background

YMSM represented a disproportionate number of new HIV infections in 2019. However, HIV testing rates among YMSM are both inconsistent and low. Similarly, only a small number of YMSM have taken PrEP, a biomedical intervention for HIV prevention.^{2,3}

45% of gay youth have never had an HIV test in their life

YMSM encounter a number of barriers to accessing HIV testing and PrEP, especially in rural areas, including:

- low perceived risk
- low motivation
- lack of information
- poor access to convenient HIV prevention services.^{4,5}

What was the goal of the study?

The MyChoices study aimed to develop and test how well the MyChoices app was received among YMSM. In addition to changes in HIV testing and PrEP use rates, the study primarily looked at:



Feasibility
can the intervention be carried out successfully by providers



Acceptability
is the intervention appropriate from the participant perspective

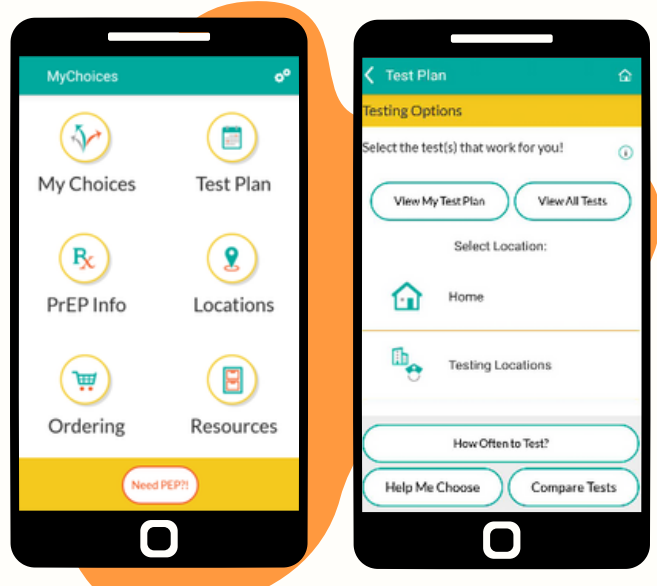
The Intervention

The study was a two-arm randomized control trial (RCT) where participants had a 2-to-1 chance of being randomly selected to receive the MyChoices app intervention and followed for 6 months.

After multiple rounds of focus groups, beta testing, and a pilot, the app intervention provided:

- sexual risk assessment
- sex diary
- sexual risk assessment & plan
- geo-based PrEP locator
- PrEP Testimonials

Participants in the control arm received CDC sexual health information and access to services at each study site.



The Participants

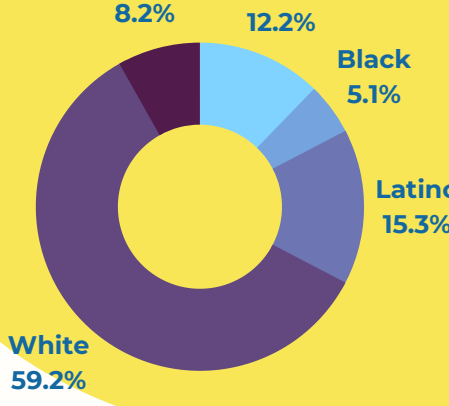
60 Participants were recruited through social media and outreach across 3 sites (Bronx, NYC; Boston, and Chapel Hill).

Eligible participants had to:

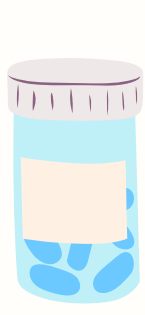
- identify as cisgender men
- be aged 15 to 24
- not have a recent HIV test
- not be on PrEP
- be at risk for HIV

Participant's average age: **22**

Race/Ethnicity



80% of participants have had a prior HIV test



98% of participants have heard of PrEP

How did participants use the app?

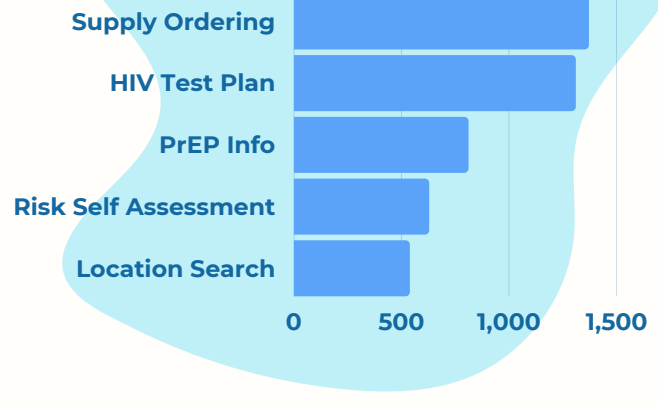
To describe how well participants accepted specific features of the app, researchers looked at app data and found that among 33 intervention participants:

94% of individuals opened the app at least once

15.3 was the average number of sessions per user

2.6 was the average number of minutes per session

Most viewed feature by number of total views over 6 months



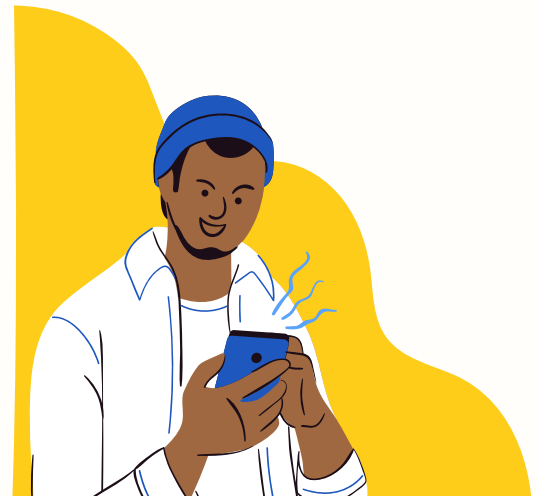
When surveyed about how participants felt about the app, most agreed or strongly agreed that

94% the app was easy to use

70% functions were well integrated

82% they'd suggest it to a friend

These numbers suggest that users accepted and used the app at a high enough rate to be tested on a largescale.



How did MyChoices affect HIV testing?

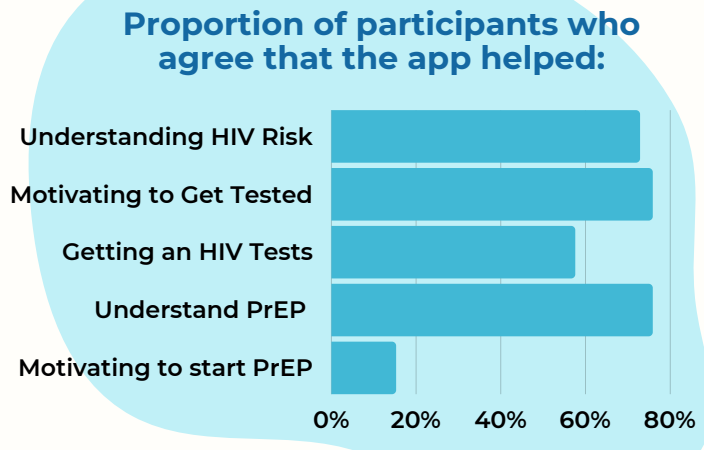
When it came to HIV testing, MyChoices compared to or scored better than similar mobile app interventions.

22% more HIV tests among participants who used MyChoices.

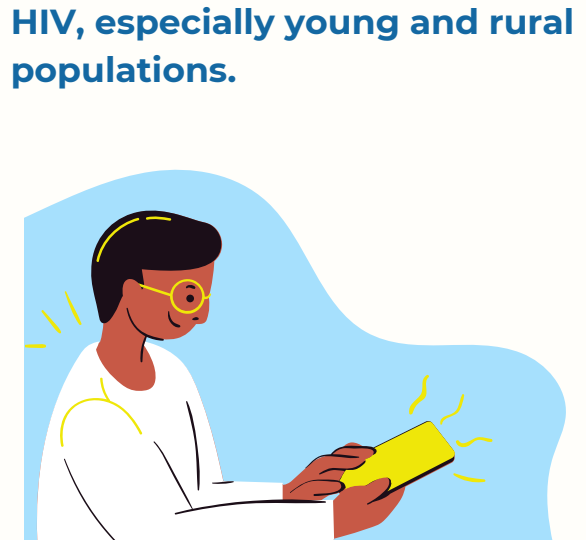
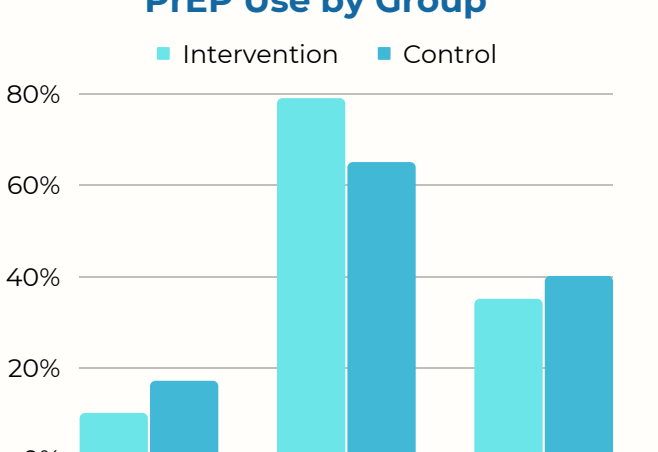
However, there are no evidence-based mobile apps promoted in the CDC's Compendium, a collection of interventions and best practices for HIV prevention at the state and local level.

This study showed that mobile app interventions like MyChoices could play a vital role in reaching broader communities affected by HIV, especially young and rural populations.

Proportion of participants who agree that the app helped:



Comparison of HIV Testing and PrEP Use by Group



“The most useful thing for me was the information about PrEP, testing, and the health insurance. There is a lot of stuff there that I didn't know and so I found that to be really helpful for me just sort of trying to figure out like I'm eighteen, so I'm just sort of starting to figure things out on my own”
Participant, 18 years old

References

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4. Shover CL, Javanbakht M, Shoptaw S, et al. HIV preexposure prophylaxis initiation at a large community clinic: differences between eligibility, awareness, and uptake. American Journal of Public Health. 2018; 108(10).
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This work was funded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health (U19 HD089881).

