Check That!
An Evaluation of Alcohol Related Apps to Reduce Alcohol Consumption

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Background: There are thousands of Alcohol apps that are focused on tracking alcohol intake, and helping to reduce and even stop the use of alcohol. Despite a growing number of reviews in this area, popular alcohol apps have not been comprehensively analyzed in terms of features related to engagement, functionality, aesthetics, information quality, and content.

Methods: The databases containing information about the first 100 alcohol apps on iTunes were downloaded in 2015. Database filters were applied to select the most popular apps available in the iTunes store. Two researchers screened the descriptions selecting only alcohol management apps. App quality were independently assessed using the Mobile App Rating Scale (MARS) by two groups. The MARS scores from each group were averaged for each app. Finally, two experts analyzed and rated each app for content validity.

Results: Of the 84 apps assessed on 5-point MARS scales, apps were of average quality (M =2.56, SD =0.75); "functionality" (M =3.9, SD =0.62) was the highest, "Aesthetics"(M=3.12, SD=0.72) was intermediate. For the top 10 Apps, engagement (M= 3.77, SD=0.55) was the lowest, and "functionality" (M=4.32, SD=0.36) was almost as high as the aesthetic score (M=4.33, SD=0.24). For the bottom 10 Apps, engagement (M=1.83, SD=0.32) was also the lowest, "functionality" (M=2.94, SD=0.40) was the highest, and aesthetics (M=2.21, SD=0.36) fell in-between. The quality score of the top 10 Apps (M=4.14, SD=0.14) was two units above that of the bottom ten Apps (M=2.33, SD=0.22).

Conclusions: The popular apps assessed have overall moderate quality. On comparing the top ten apps to the bottom ten, all domains of app quality ratings of the top ten apps showed higher mean scores than the bottom ten apps. For both groups, engagement is the lowest rated, and functionality is among the higher scores. The aesthetic was the highest in the top ten apps, but was the 2nd highest score in the bottom ten apps.

Public Health and/or Health Professions Relevance: Scientifically evaluated apps may be offered as an additional treatment form for alcohol consumption reduction. To date, there are no publications offering evaluated and expert recommended apps for alcohol consumption reduction.