Aspects from The PRECIOUS project* based on Motivational Interviewing

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Background
Most existing apps include an amalgam of different techniques not strictly based in one unique psychological theory to foster behavior change. Main problems derived from this are low adherence and efficacy of the app. Motivational interviewing (MI) has demonstrated its use in promoting behavior change1. However, scarce health apps succeed to include MI techniques and principles in its architecture and contents2. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach (health professionals, app & software developers, MI experts) is required to build a comprehensive, scientifically grounded and evidence-based preventive health app with certain guarantees of quality3.

Keywords: Motivational Interviewing, mHealth, Healthy Lifestyle, Physical Activity, Diet, Pilot test, Engagement, Behaviour Change.

Objectives

This app will monitor diet and physical activity to promote behavior change in final users.

Method
A panel of experts in several psychological theories (self-determination theory, cognitive-behavioral theories and MI) developed the theoretical framework of Precious app and its specific contents.

Results
The spirit of MI has been adapted to the app-user interface. That includes, collaborative approach (see Figure 1); acceptance of users’ priorities & values (see Figures 3-4); a compressive approach aimed at achieving users’ goals (Figures 3 & 4); evoking users’ skills & resources to achieve their goals (Figures 5-9).

The four processes of MI (engaging, focusing, evoking and planning) have been implemented in the two main modules of the app: the Diet app (Diet and Diet Challenges) and the Physical Activity app (Mountain climber app) (Figures 2, 10 & 11). In each module, the different MI micro-abilities have been implemented: open questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries and offering information to the users with their permission (Figures 12-15).

References

Conclusions
The challenge of building an app based on MI is worthwhile and possible.

Initial tests of the Precious app with final users will provide concrete results concerning its acceptability, usability and effectiveness to promote and sustain behavior change towards a healthier lifestyle.

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