Introduction

- Risk of weight gain is high among college-aged youth, and ethnic minority college women are especially vulnerable (Freedman, 2010).
- Text reminders and self-monitoring, particularly through cell phone photo tracking has many benefits for weight loss among normal weight college-aged youths, including:
  - Providing the ability to more frequently self-monitor behavior (Easier to transport records, log food intake, and remember to log entries),
  - Facilitating the recording process through availability of nutrition and other information,
  - Providing a medium that is engaging,
  - Providing the ability to modify information in real-time,
  - Promoting more satisfaction with study equipment,
  - And contributing positively to study retention (Burke et al., 2005; Cooper et al., 2002).

Aims

1. To explore the acceptability & feasibility of using mobile technology as a self-monitoring tool to assist ethnic minority college women to engage in healthy eating.
2. To measure satisfaction with the intervention.
3. To explore adherence to a daily electronic food photo-journal over the course of three weeks, and whether factors such as study satisfaction, and baseline participant characteristics influenced adherence.

Methods

Participants

- A total of 43 ethnically diverse 1st and 2nd year NEU female undergraduates (mean age = 18.96, African American = 52%, Hispanic/Latina = 37%, Bi-racial = 11%).

Methods

- As a part of a 3-week healthy eating intervention, participants:
  - chose two nutrition goals;
  - self-monitored by photographing each meal and uploading pictures on the online platform “photobucket”; received 3 text messages a day encouraging healthy eating.
  - Participants completed self-report measures of depression and body image concerns. Their height and weight were measured by a nurse.
  - Upon completion of the study, participants rated their satisfaction with the intervention.

Results

- 76% reported at least somewhat helped them feel motivated about cultivating health eating habits.
- 83% liked the text message reminders.
- 62% at least sometimes modified their eating as a result of the text message.
- 61% liked using Photobucket to track their meals.
- Body dissatisfaction was a negative predictor of satisfaction.

Adherence

- A total of 1,722 records of meals and snacks uploaded on Photobucket.
- Every participant provided 40 (SD=21; min=1; max=84) photos across a 3-week long intervention time period.
- Adherence was 100% at baseline, and with every additional study day, the chance of non-adherence increased by 10%.
- Body dissatisfaction was a negative predictor of adherence.

Discussion & Future Directions

- Mobile technology provides innovative and feasible avenues for healthy eating interventions among college students.
- Further research is needed to determine how to increase adherence over longer time periods.
- Additional research should explore how the presence of interactive or personalized features may enhance long-term engagement.

References