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An 'app'ropriate resource? Using mobile apps to provide feeding advice and support to parents

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An 'app'ropriate resource? Using mobile apps to provide feeding advice and support to parents. G.L.MITCHELL, C.FARROW, E.HAYCRAFT. Loughborough University Centre for Research into Eating Disorders, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, UK.

Feeding problems in children are extremely common and can affect long-term physical health, in addition to being acutely stressful for both the parent and child. Despite this, advice on child feeding is still poorly communicated to parents and many struggle to find professional support and advice when they experience problems feeding their child. The purpose of this research was to develop a resource to address this; one which allows for wide and cost-effective dissemination of expert advice and avoids traditional barriers to healthcare access. To this end, we developed a free-to-download mobile app for smartphones (and website version for non-app users). Following a review of the literature on infant feeding problems, the resource was developed to offer; 1) education on the most prevalent feeding difficulties; 2) interactive, tangible tools and tips to implement suggested strategies; 3) assessment tools to monitor problem severity and parent/child subjective wellbeing. Mothers (N=18) discussed their feeding experiences and appraised the mobile app and website prototypes. Feedback confirmed that feeding problems were common, guidance was inadequate, and that this resource was viewed as extremely helpful, novel, and contained a depth of information beyond anything previously seen. Importantly, mothers welcomed the possibility of using a mobile app to access feeding-related guidance. Overall, this resource represents a novel way to deliver education and guidance in an easy-to-use, highly accessible way that fits with modern parents' lifestyles. Further evaluation activities are planned to test the efficacy of the resource as an intervention tool.