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Empowering Men To Screen: The ScreenMen mHealth Project

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Despite being perceived to be the ‘stronger sex’, global men’s health reports found that men have shorter life expectancy and higher morbidity and mortality across most illnesses compared to women. Various efforts have been made to address this; health screening is recognised to be an effective strategy to improve men’s health. However, the uptake of screening in men is low; this has motivated the University of Malaya Men’s Health Research team to find solutions to tackle this important public health problem.

As Malaysia has high mobile phone ownership, we explored the use of mobile technology to modify men’s health-screening behaviour. Mobile health (mHealth), which aims to deliver healthcare to people anytime and anywhere, is becoming an important strategy to improve health care globally. It provides a convenient platform for men to seek health information, particularly among busy working adult men who are hard to reach.

Using the UKMRC Framework, the ScreenMen mHealth project team collaborates with CIMB Group to develop a mobile web app to increase uptake of health screening among male workers in the bank. The content is produced based on recommendations from local and international clinical practice guidelines on screening and a user-centred approach is used to design the web app.

The rigorous content development and iterative designing process makes ScreenMen the first mobile web app in the world to provide comprehensive and evidence-based health screening for men. It contains a bite-size educational video that addresses misconceptions about health screening, an in-built algorithm that guides men systematically through the screening process and provides personalised health screening recommendations based on individual health risks. ScreenMen empowers men to undergo evidence-based health screening, and educate them to avoid unnecessary health screening tests such as tumour markers and imaging.

ScreenMen was pilot tested and found to be useful in motivating men to go for screening. For more information, visit: http://ehealth.dicc.um.edu.my/area-of-expertise/the-screenmen-project/