

Researchers test a web-based tool to encourage good nutrition among urban youth

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Childhood obesity is a serious public health challenge in the United States, especially among black and Latino adolescents. The pervasive use of technology and new media among this population creates a unique

opportunity for a targeted health intervention through these avenues.

With this in mind, CUNY SPH doctoral students Sandra Verdaguer and Katrina F. Mateo and Associate Professor May May Leung of Hunter College led a study of black and Latino children in East Harlem on the usability of prototypes of an interactive, tablet-optimized manga-style comic tailored to promote increased intake of fruits and vegetables or water. The results were published in *JMIR Formative Research*.

The researchers recruited English-speaking Latino and black children ages 9 to 13 to participate in two rounds of usability testing to provide feedback and identify problems to help inform final development of the web-based [tool](#). The study found the overall experience with the tool to be positive, especially related to storyline, sound effects, and color schemes. Feedback from the participants resulted in a navigation guide being added, clickable icons being made more visible, graphic designs improved and programming errors corrected.

"Future usability testing of web-based tools with youth should consider using dyad sessions since the interaction between participants while they both use the tool can lead to richer feedback," says Verdaguer.

The finalized tool was recently tested in a two-group randomized study, the initial findings of which will be presented in March at the 2019 Society of Behavioral Medicine meeting in Washington, DC.

More information: Sandra Verdaguer et al. A Web-Based Interactive Tool to Reduce Childhood Obesity Risk in Urban Minority Youth: Usability Testing Study, *JMIR Formative Research* (2018). [DOI: 10.2196/formative.9747](https://doi.org/10.2196/formative.9747)

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