



FIGHT BAD GUYS, REMEMBER YOUR MEDS, SAVE THE WORLD

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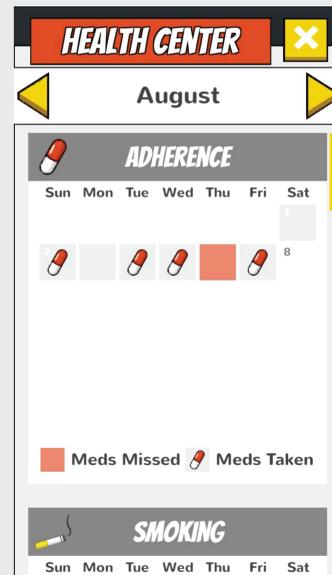
SCREENSHOTS



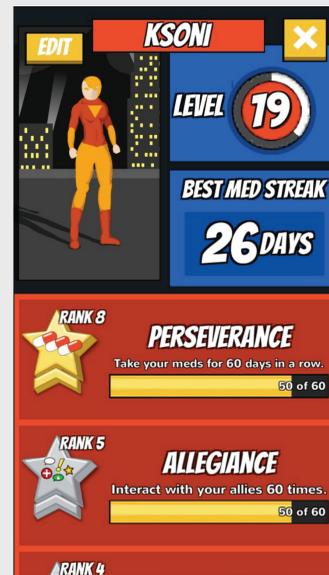
Customizable Avatars



Interaction between users



Visualization of Behavior

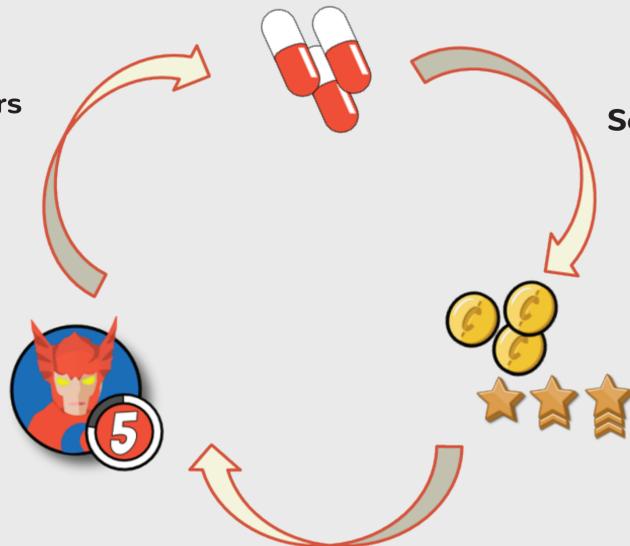


Have fun and stay motivated

THE OUTCOME

Adherence
+
Healthy Behaviors
+
Education

Mini-Games
+
Social Engagement



Personal Growth + Self Empowerment

BACKGROUND

After diagnosis, many HIV+ YMSM delay entering medical care, and do not optimally adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART) or achieve viral suppression. In response, we developed Epic Allies, a theory-based mobile phone application (app) that utilizes game mechanics and social networking features to improve engagement in care, ART uptake, adherence and viral suppression rates among HIV+ YMSM.

METHODS

Through a Phase I small business grant (SBIR), our team developed the initial concept for Epic Allies, guided by the Information-Motivation Behavioral Skills model and the Fogg Behavioral Model (FBM) of behavior change through technology. From 9/13 to 5/14, we conducted focus groups and usability sessions with 27 HIV+ YMSM to assess ART adherence, motivation and behavior change needs, and strategies to address these needs via a mobile app.

RESULTS

Analysis of focus group data revealed several overarching themes including the importance of creating an app that is interactive, social, informational, customizable and personalized. This led to finalization of: 1) real time data tracking of adherence with graphic visualizations; 2) tailored reminders and motivational messages; 3) connection to a network of other HIV+ YMSM; and 4) a gaming approach engineered to reinforce daily adherence tracking, promote social networking support among users, encourage learning and skill building, and maintain user engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

Epic Allies addresses a critical need for interventions that promote ART uptake and adherence delivered through low-cost, widely utilized technology and by using an engaging, interactive approach, including gamification and social networking, that is highly appealing for YMSM. After further app development, we will test the efficacy of Epic Allies in a randomized controlled trial within the Adolescent Trials Network (ATN) for HIV Interventions.