

Rap Artists Participate In Asthma Project

Written by Robert ID1336
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Participants in the National Institutes of Health funded study receive a wireless MP3 player loaded with popular music, music-videos, and videogames. Interspersed amongst the music and games are messages from celebrities, such as hip-hop rap artist Ludacris and Chicago White Sox baseball player Carl Everett, encouraging teenagers to proactively manage their asthma. The messages range from personal success stories to reminders such as "use your quick-acting inhaler 15 minutes before exercise".

"A huge factor in asthma is denial. Often adolescents don't want to admit they have asthma because they see it as a weakness, especially in the African-American and Hispanic communities," said Dr. Giselle Mosnaim, an allergy and immunology specialist at Rush University Medical Center. "As a result, they don't want to be seen taking their asthma medicines. When a high profile artist or athlete, especially one with asthma, discusses the importance of taking medication or avoiding cigarettes, that is an extremely powerful message to a young person."

The prevalence of asthma and poor outcomes among Chicago children is a major public health concern. According to the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago, African American children in Chicago have a prevalence rate of 25%; nearly double the national average for their ethnicity. Asthma is the leading cause of hospitalization for children in Illinois and the asthma death rate for African Americans in Illinois is more than four times the national average.

"To improve asthma education and adherence among this hard to reach group, we need to hold their interest by tactfully intermingling health messages and instructions with entertaining content," said Mosnaim.

SixtySeven Kilohertz, Inc, has pioneered a system called ADEPT (Adolescents' Disease Empowerment and Persistency Technology) to integrate wireless messaging and content with recorded music. The health-related messages are short and highly produced with music and effects. After every couple of songs or videos, an asthma-related message will play. The musical tracks, videos and messages can be updated and distributed wirelessly to the handheld devices to keep the content fresh.

The system also tracks the patient. Participants are reminded to take their medications and

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required to complete a weekly asthma symptom diary on their device.

Musical contributions and/or interviews have been secured with national hip-hop rap artists such as Ludacris, Chingy, I-20, Ness Elliot, Do or Die, Angie Stone and American Idol winner Ruben Studdard.

"The artists have shown strong enthusiasm for the project all around, both as a forum for showcasing their talent and as a way of giving back to their communities," said Sarah Rosenbaum, producer for SixtySeven Kilohertz, Inc.

The study will enroll 40 African-American adolescents ages 11 through 17. The purpose is to determine if there is greater compliance among teens that receive the asthma-related messages from well-known people that they admire.

More information can be obtained here <http://www.rush.edu>