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## MilteenChat app to promote coping in military youth

**Kathryn R Puskar**

University of Pittsburgh, USA

Around 30% of military adolescents report feeling sad or hopeless, and one in four has considered suicide. There are limited resources available for military adolescents coping with stresses. Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand stresses faced by adolescents in military life and helpful coping strategies adolescents have used, and to develop an app helping military youth cope with stresses. A qualitative study using focus groups with 31 military adolescents were conducted. Adolescents aged 12 to 18 were recruited in the Pittsburgh area, in collaboration with the Military Children's Collaborative Group (MCCG) in San Diego. Four focus groups were held in the designated community sites. Themes were generated from the focus group sessions. Key themes generated focused on three main areas: stressors, coping strategies, and desired features included in the app. Stressors military youth commonly experienced were loneliness, frequent relocation, missing special events in life, and difficulty communicating with peers and teachers. In terms of the app design, they valued a clean and easy-to-use interface that can provide them resources to deal with a parent's absence. Adding game features and providing rewards of goal achievement would make the app more attractive. Most importantly, the app that allows adolescents to talk to one another and exchange tips can be beneficial to address negative emotions and form a support network. The MilTeenChat app was developed and widely distributed. Through the app, adolescents foster a sense of community and encourage mutual learning about coping with stresses of military life, and provide education resources in military use.

krp12@pitt.edu