

GABE

A Health and Wellness Virtual Agent System for African American Men

Improving the health of men will improve the health of families and communities

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Gabe project revolves around creating a software application that delivers a health and wellness intervention to young African American men. At the heart of the system is an embodied conversational agent (ECA) that has conversations with the users, both to understand which health problems they are at risk for and to discuss potential solutions to those problems.

We use an ECA to deliver the content in an engaging way, which has the potential to increase long-term user retention. This is important for improving health outcomes.

The project is a collaborative effort between Northeastern University and Boston Medical Center. It is funded by the Kellogg Foundation and is in its second year out of three.

It is now in the early development stage, with most of the background literature work and general system structure development completed.

CHALLENGES

Building a system of interventions for men, specifically African Americans, introduces some challenges.

We build on previous work on virtual agent systems designed for African American women; however, there is a general lack of literature focusing specifically on African American men. Designing social and clinical content for this particular population has required finding relevant best practices for discussing these specific health issues with them.

OBJECTIVES

The project's objectives are to introduce new paradigms of care needed to engage young African American men. This population has historically been ignored in policy and research, they have a lower life expectancy, and lack a connection with healthcare, when compared with members of other populations.



The Gabe Conversational Agent

AIMS

The general aim of the Gabe system is to **provide age appropriate health promotion and identify and reduce health risks.**

Specifically, including men in preconception care interventions may help to meet the 2020 Healthy People objectives and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) objectives by reducing **unintended pregnancies**, the **infant mortality rate**, **low birth weight**, and **preterm birth**.

System Structure

