

HKU Faculty of Dentistry student team launches free toothbrushing app for children

A student team at the HKU Faculty of Dentistry has launched a free mobile app in English and Cantonese that helps children learn how to brush their teeth.



The “Brush Buddy” app guides children in how to use toothpaste and a toothbrush to clean their teeth, through step-by-step pictures and narration with subtitles, in both English and Chinese (traditional script). The app also prompts the children to take a snapshot of their teeth before and after brushing, to make the exercise fun for them.

The team that developed the app consisted of current HKU dental students Miss Teresa CY Ho (leader), Miss Raechelle Koh, and Mr Chun-pang Poon. Under the mentorship of Prof Colman McGrath (Clinical Professor in Dental Public Health), the team had previously researched available apps teaching children about oral self-care, and found that an English app was effective but that there was no Chinese version on the market.

After reviewing available educational material on dental public health and self-care, the team created their prototype app in early June 2014, in collaboration with the apps developer AXIO Kids, and tested it on 167 children at a primary school in Hong Kong. They then refined the app and uploaded it for free public access on the Apple iTunes store, at <https://itunes.apple.com/hk/app/id887020287>. The app is both Apple iPhone and iPad compatible.

“Our team applied knowledge and skills learnt at HKU regarding oral health, public and community health education, and evidence-based dentistry, as well as problem-solving and information analysis skills,” says team leader Miss Teresa Ho. “Through this knowledge exchange project, we aim to promote oral health among primary school children aged 6 to 12 by encouraging oral self-care.”

The students’ project was supported by a Student Knowledge Exchange (KE) Project Grant from the HKU KE Fund 2013-14, granted by the HKSAR University Grants Committee to HKU.

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