Evaluating Mobile Apps

Adapted from Cook VE, Ellis AK, Hildebrand KJ. Mobile health applications in clinical practice: pearls, pitfalls, and key considerations. Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol. 2016 Aug;117(2):143-9. doi: 10.1016/j.anai.2016.01.012. Review.

Criteria for Evaluation	Benchmarks of a high-quality mHealth App	Yes/No
Is authorship easily identifiable and are the stated affiliations and endorsements evident?	Creator and developer are identifiable	
	Affiliations and endorsements are evident	
	Medical expert involved in development	
Is the app accessible with respect to language, health literacy, and technology literacy?	Plain language	
	Clear content display	
	Engaging and interactive content	
Is the content consistent with evidence-based medical literature or current best practice/standard of care?	Source of medical information content is clearly visible in app and referenced	
Is the app free or does it cost? Does advertising within the app contribute to bias or conflict of interest?	No advertising within the app	
	No commercial sponsorship	
	No perceived conflicts of interest or bias	
Is the mHealth app licensed by the Food and Drug Administration or Health Canada; is it endorsed by an academic institution or medical professional organization?	Licensing obtained through a government agency	
	Endorsed by an academic institution or professional medical organization	
	Health apps that have undergone peer review	

Criteria for Evaluation	Benchmarks of a high-quality mHealth App	Yes/No
Is there a privacy policy stating information will be encrypted and not shared with third parties?	A privacy policy exists and is easy to read and understand	
	Data encryption should be standard	
	No data sharing with any third parties	
	Unnecessary data collection is minimized; collects only what is needed for core function of the app	
	Clear data destruction policies are described	
Is there a clear requirement for parental/guardian permission for apps directed at children and adolescents?	Parental/guardian permission is described in privacy policy	
Is the app functional over time with recent updates?	Recent version or update within the last year	
Are consumers notified in the event of a breach of privacy and health information?	Consumers notification described in privacy policy	
Is there a way for consumers to contact the app?	Contact method for further questions or complaints is listed	
	Consumers receive replies when questions put forward to app contact listed	