

## Letters to the editor

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# Are dating apps a public health issue?

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**Dear editor:**

Nowadays, development of applications for mobile phones has become very important in daily life and its use has been diversified. One of the activities that have had major changes with the advent of this technology, among men and women with heterosexual and homosexual orientation, has been to meet people via dating apps; actually, millions of users daily enter to cyber-dating websites [1].

Most of new dating applications allow interaction between real and virtual spaces using the Global Positioning System (GPS) facilitating physical encounter among users. Some applications, for instance Tinder, offer the user the opportunity to define whether he or she likes or not a person after viewing a profile containing photos and a brief description, after which, the application allows users to start immediately a private conversation [2].

However, some risks related to the use of these applications are being disclosed. Thus, in Asia-Pacific area a possible relationship has been established between the use of dating apps, such as Tinder, Grindr and Growlr, and an increase in HIV positive cases among adolescents [3]. In Peru, the last report of the General Directorate of Epidemiology (DGE) showed that HIV was most prevalent in the group of young adults because of the exposure to the virus before the age of 20; it is necessary to investigate the potential impact of the use of this type of dating apps on the increasing number of casual sexual encounters [4].

Also, some authors have begun to note that there is a form of addiction related to the use of these dating apps; which would be based on reducing anxiety of those with high sensitivity to rejection by not showing a negative feedback [2]. Dependence on these applications could increase the likelihood of developing nomophobia, which is an irrational fear to leave home without a mobile phone.

On the other hand, in the UK it has been reported an increase of up to 560 percent in the number of crimes related to these applications during the past two years, including sexual assault, directed robberies and murders [5]. This could be explained because profiles that people use to present themselves sometimes contain personal information and do not provide security of facing a real person profile.

In conclusion, although the use of dating apps around the world is constantly increasing, its use has been linked indirectly to an increase on the number of HIV positive cases, as well as addiction and an increased number of crimes related to users. For this reason, we believe it is of considerable importance in public health research to investigate about these issues, as well as other possible consequences associated with the use of these applications.

## Notes

**From the editor**

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Authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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