

# App AiMs to improve motivation based on clinical research

March 10 2015, by Holly Finch

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Screenshot of AiM app

A new app created by Canterbury Christ Church University academics

aims to help you improve motivation and achieve the things you want.

AiM- App to Improve Motivation is the result of three years research by Christ Church Clinicians who worked to create the most effective mobile application to motivate people to change their lives for the better.

Behaviour changes including weight management, giving up smoking, controlling alcohol and drug use, exercising more, studying, achieving work-life balance and managing prescribed medication effectively are all goals supported by AiM app.

Unlike other applications, AiM is highly personalised and functions are specifically tailored to an individual's targets and needs. This allows you to consider and remind yourself of your reasons for change.

Dr Daniel Bressington, Visiting Reader in Mental Health and Harvey Wells, Visiting Research Fellow, both at Canterbury Christ Church University, together have almost 40 years' experience between them working as clinicians implementing behaviour change strategies with patients.

Dan's career as a Mental Health Nurse involves helping people to explore their thoughts and feelings about treatment in order for them to be better at taking their prescribed medication. Harvey's experience is working with individuals that use drugs and alcohol, helping them to return to a healthy lifestyle.



Screenshot of AiM app

Although these [behaviours](#) are very different, Dan and Harvey use similar principles in their work to help a person make sustainable changes to their life. Their knowledge of these specific behaviours allowed them to collaborate and create a platform that is general and can apply to lots of different behaviours, but also specific enough to be tailored to individual needs.

Harvey said: "Getting personal help to change health behaviours is expensive and exclusive. Seeing a psychotherapist or a nurse to get help

to stop smoking or lose weight have limited availability and will cost someone a lot of money."

"Smartphone technology as a resource is inexpensive and available to the person 24 hours a day, not just during their one-hour session each week."

Features of AiM include Emergency Settings; this allows the user to upload motivational pictures or videos, insert a personal message and have the option of sending a text message to someone who can help. My Locations, sets up locations where you would benefit from receiving a motivational message, for example, to go for a run when you get home or to remind you of the need to limit alcohol intake when in a pub. And, Weekly Aims, a summary of overall motivation is stored to help guide weekly goals.

Dan said: "AiM has been developed based on a counselling approach called 'Motivational Interviewing'; this approach helps people explore their own personal reasons for change and set themselves small achievable goals which help to maintain motivation over time. The app also allows people to remind themselves of why they want to change their behaviours at the right time and place."



Screenshot of AiM app

Harvey continued: "The difference with AiM is that it promotes motivation rather than focusing on information-based interventions. These interventions are aimed at increasing the person's awareness of the risks or harms associated with not changing their behaviour. The use of 'fear-arousing' messages often fails to work as we can easily find evidence that undermines these warnings, i.e. 'one cigarette won't kill me one hamburger won't make me fat.'

"It is the long term use of these behaviours that is the problem. People

need to be supported and guided to make changes, not told by an authority that what they are doing is wrong and harmful."

AiM is available on Android and Apple devices and all money raised from purchasing the app will be used for further research and analysis. User information will be collected anonymously and used for further research by Dan and Harvey.

One user of the app, David Condon, reviewed AiM app on Google Play and said: "The app is incredibly helpful for anyone seeking change or professionals facilitating it. It gives excellent guidance on ways of making change happen. It is an easy wonderful tool to refer to. I highly recommend it."

**More information:** More details about AiM can be found at the website: [www.my-aim.net/](http://www.my-aim.net/)

Provided by Canterbury Christ Church University

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