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HealthyState: Presenting Public Health Data to Promote Healthier Life Choices

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INTRODUCTION: Choosing where to live is an important health decision facing all. The difficulty involved in this decision-making process motivated us to design the HealthyState app.

OBJECTIVE: To help people make informed decisions based on how health conditions vary across 50 US states.

METHODS: HealthyState transforms publicly available statistical data from the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Indicators Data Warehouse the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Kaiser Family Foundation's State Health facts and United Health Foundation's America's State Health Rankings into usable visualizations. This data is transformed into a color-coded map of the US. The data for each state is presented as a human body whose shape and organ change based on representative health condition statistics. A person zooms in on a state from the interactive map of the US. Individual organs of the body are shaded in color according to the prevalence of health conditions related to that organ. For example, if heart disease is more prevalent in the selected state, then the heart will appear darker. Tapping on an organ shows an informational pop-up that provides a summary of the associated health conditions and statistics. The pop-up includes a 'More Info' button for detailed information about the health issue.

CONCLUSION: We have applied computing and visualization techniques to make public health data available in a more accessible and user-friendly way. We hope this approach serves to enable people to more effectively incorporate health considerations when making important life decisions.

Learning Areas:

Communication and informatics
Public health or related education

Learning Objectives:

To design an app that transforms public health data in a usable and comprehensible form with the help of technology so as to use public health data in making life decisions

Keywords: Health Information Systems, Public Health