At Your Cervix is a team of interdisciplinary undergraduate students from New York University who competed in the Open 17 Challenge as Team Public Cervix Announcement. In the final pitch of the challenge, the team was selected to join the SDG summer school. The school is hosted by the Geneva-Tsinghua Initiative, under mentorship from the Be Healthy Be Mobile team at the WHO and the ITU, with the aim to create a supportive, collaborative space for students with innovative interventions targeting the sustainable development goals.

The team focuses on SDG 3: “Good Health and Well-being”, by targeting early detection of cervical cancer. When caught early, cervical cancer is treatable. The five-year survival rate drops significantly from 99% when caught at stage 0 to 35% when recognized at stage IIIA. Too often women’s symptoms are dismissed, even when they indicate a larger problem.

The proposed intervention expands the focus of period tracking apps from fertility to general reproductive health. Many of the early symptoms of cervical cancer are similar to those of an irregular menstrual cycle. By adding an algorithm that can begin to detect irregularities as a user inputs them, the app could track when a concerning trend forms in those irregularities and notify the person that further testing is necessary.

We plan to partner with an already existing app so the current user base will benefit from the proposed detection services. The definition of an irregular cycle cannot truly be generalized; it varies depending on the person. The current state of menstrual cycle applications asks individuals to input a variety of symptoms ranging from discharge, flow, pain, sex, doctors visits, mood etc. This information hypothetically allows for the app, with the proper algorithm, to determine what each person’s “normal” is. Once a user’s normal is determined, the app will be able to notice their abnormal. For example, if one woman always has 3-5 day periods with minimal cramping, but over the past 6 months they have started to shift to 5-7 day periods with heavy cramping, the app registers that data and notifies them that an irregular trend is occurring.

Irregularities can be caused by many things which is why it is important to refer the user to a healthcare professional or facility that can accurately assess the situation and cause. We hope to add not just an algorithm, but a platform for users to identify local health care and educational resources that can aid them in taking agency over their own health.

In a world where sexual health is rarely talked about, it is time for individuals to be given the opportunity to educate themselves and seek the help that they need without needing to have a medical degree.