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Study: Text Messages Boost Young Patients' Medication Adherence

Text messaging could significantly improve medication adherence among young liver transplant patients, according to **a study published** last month in the journal *Pediatrics*, the *New York Times* reports.

For the study, researchers at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York used a program called CareSpeak to send text message medication reminders to 41 pediatric liver transplant patients for one year.

Under the program, clinicians entered patients' medications and dosages into the text messaging programming. The patients then were able to control the frequency and times of their text message alerts.

After receiving the text message reminder to take a certain medication, patients were required to text back within an hour to confirm that they had complied. If patients failed to respond to the text message reminder, their caregivers or parents were alerted.

Results

The researchers found that patients participating in the text message study were more likely to take their medications than they had been previously. In addition, 12 of the young liver transplant patients experienced rejection episodes in the previous year, while only two did during the study.

Challenges

Tamir Miloh -- assistant professor of pediatrics and surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital and lead author of the study -- said that while the researchers paid for the cost of text messaging, nearly a third of patients had to drop out of the study because they either lost their phone privileges or could not afford their cell phones.

He said, "In the future, we are hoping that insurance companies might support some kind of text message system for their patients."

Expansion?

Researchers at Mount Sinai Hospital hope to expand the use of the text message medication adherence program.

Miloh said, "Text messaging could be used with almost any chronic disease and with anyone who has memory problems or just needs reminders." He added, "This kind of communication can only help to enhance the relationship between patients and their clinicians."

Ideas for expanding the program include:

- Adding photos of the specific pill to take;
- Sending reminders for appointments and medication refills;
- Creating a text message support group; and
- Sending positive feedback and motivational messages from physicians and other health care providers (Chen, *New York Times*, 11/5).

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