

Can Text Messaging Improve Medication Adherence?

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DENVER — Text messaging and adolescents don't always mix well, but researchers at National Jewish Health hope text messages can spur teenagers to take their asthma medications more reliably. The study is testing whether health information and medication reminders via text message will boost adolescent's adherence to asthma medication regimens.

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"We know that the combination of hectic schedules and less parental supervision can lead many teens to lack consistency in taking their daily asthma medications," said Daniel Searing, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at National Jewish Health. "We also know that most teens text frequently. We want to see if providing them with asthma information and reminders helps with their medication adherence."

One of the biggest challenges doctors face caring for patients with chronic disease is making sure that the patients stay diligent about taking their daily medications. On average, asthma patients take less than half their prescribed medications. This is especially problematic with adolescents. Taking medications regularly, even when patients do not perceive symptoms, is crucial to maintaining control of asthma and other chronic diseases.

The pilot study is a month-long program with a series of automated text messages that consist of reminders and educational messages. The messages vary from reminders to take medications to tips on how to use their medication and links to the National Jewish Health website where they can learn more information about asthma. One group in the study receives the messages, the other does not receive the texts. At the end of the month researchers will then compare medication adherence between the two groups.

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"Other studies have indicated that texting has now become the preferred method by which teens communicate with each other. Our goal in this brief study is to see if teens are receptive to this type of communication from a health care provider and to see if they're taking their medications more frequently," said Dr. Searing. "For doctors knowing that patients are taking their medication as prescribed is very important. The more confidence we have that a teen is taking their meds the more accurately we can determine its effectiveness."

Researchers are hoping to see that those in the text message group show improvement in medication adherence. If they see that correlation, the next step will be to set up a longer term study examining if those text messages have a positive impact on asthma outcomes in participants.

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders.

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Media Contacts

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