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Editorial

Text Messaging Applications for Improving Health: An Important Resource for Low-Income and Underserved Populations

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The use of technology to influence health related behavior has increased over time. Over ninety percent of the US populations are mobile phone owners [1]. Trends in smartphone phone ownership are also increasing [2]. With smartphones, users to can partake in varied tasks related to computing or accessing media. Given their widespread use, cell phones and smart phones present unparalleled opportunities for targeted communications to patients, and present particular opportunities for low-income and underserved patients. With the overwhelming majority of adults in the U.S. owning a cell phone, it's important to note that 43% of those with a household income under $30,000 on a Smartphone [2].

Intervention research on text messaging can improve understanding about the how this technology has increased medication adherence and appointment keeping. Research with varied populations on Diabetes Mellitus [3], asthma [4], HIV/AIDS [5-7], physical activity [8], vaccinations [9-11] smoking cessation [14-15], demonstrates that text messaging is a feasible, acceptable and effective approach. There is no consistent conceptual framework for interventions and outcome ascertainment varies, both of which complicates the state of current knowledge for informing others about using text messaging as a channel for promoting informed decisions and health-enhancing self-management behaviors. Some message strategies are passive, however those that are personalized and elicit a brief response appear to be most effective. Implications for research and practice are dependent upon message content, periodicity of communications, and feedback mechanisms.

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