

HIV phone support system studied

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A U.S. scientist is starting a study to determine the effectiveness of telephone support groups for older people with the human immunodeficiency virus.

Ohio University psychologist Timothy Heckman has received a \$1.5 million, four-year federal grant to test the effectiveness of such a telephone support effort.

"The telephone, as a tool for delivering support, is financially and psychologically easier for many older adults," said Heckman, who conducted a study four years ago that found a telephone support program reduced depression for rural seniors. The results of that study were published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* last year.

Now Heckman plans to expand the geographical scope of his original study and increase the number of participants.

Nearly 400 participants will be divided among three therapy models, ranging from a 12-week telephone-delivered HIV support group with sessions designed to improve the participants' coping skills to less active therapy sessions in which participants receive individual guidance only upon request.

Heckman presented his research in Washington last month during the annual conference of the Society of Behavioral Medicine.

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