

Study shows that parenting improves with coaching via cell phone

November 5 2013

(Medical Xpress)—In the first randomized trial of the effects of cell phone use, University of Kansas and Notre Dame researchers found that when parenting coaches texted and called mothers who had participated in a home-based parenting program, they were much more likely than the other mothers in the study to learn and use positive parenting strategies—both immediately following and six months after the program ended. They were less depressed and stressed than the control group who didn't receive parent training as well as the mothers who did receive the same parenting program but without the cell phone component.

Further, following the [parenting program](#), their [children](#) were more adaptable, less anxious and had better communication and social skills, according to Judy Carta, KU professor of special education, who directed the study published in the November 2013 *Pediatrics*.

The study is the first to test the effectiveness of cell phones as a way of increasing [parents'](#) engagement in home-based parenting programs and keep them from dropping out, said Carta.

"Parents who most need to learn positive ways to interact with their children are often the most likely to drop out of parenting programs," she said. "Ultimately, this is about preventing child maltreatment by showing parents a different, more positive way to interact with their children."

The intervention used in the study, Planned Activities Training, is a brief program —five 90-minute home-based sessions—aimed at preventing children's challenging behavior by giving parents strategies to use in everyday routines around getting ready for school, bedtime and eating dinner.

Parent coaches, known as home visitors, texted mothers twice a day, five days a week as well as calling them at least once a week with reminders from the PAT program along with words of encouragement and suggestions for free activities available in the community that they could do with their children.

"The cell phone allowed the mother and the home visitor to become more connected, said Kathryn Bigelow, KU assistant research professor. "The texts and calls extended the [home visits](#) outside of the home."

With the addition of the cell phone, this relatively short intervention had big effects on parenting, said Bigelow, and since the dropout rate was half of what it was for the group that didn't include the [cell phone](#) component, the model is cost-efficient and really feasible, she said.

"In home visiting programs, parents typically miss about one out of three scheduled home visits," said Carta, "so when we think about the cost benefit of including cell phones, we know that when parents don't show up for home visits, it is really expensive for home visiting programs."

Home visiting is part of the Affordable Health Care Act, said Carta. "That's given states a whole new impetus to identify evidence-based home visiting programs. Our study will become part of that evidence base."

The study was supported by the Injury Prevention Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC Foundation, the

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the AT&T Foundation and the Sprint Foundation.

Additional study collaborators are Steven Warren, KU vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, senior scientist and professor of applied behavioral science; John Borkowski, professor of psychology, and Jennifer Burke Lefever, assistant professor of psychology, University of Notre Dame.

More information: [pediatrics.aappublications.org ...
2/S167.full.pdf+html](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/lookup/doi/10.1177/0885265513505222)

Provided by University of Kansas

Citation: Study shows that parenting improves with coaching via cell phone (2013, November 5) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-parenting-cell.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--