

Study reveals text messages prevent 1 in 6 patients from failing to take medicine

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Scientists from Queen Mary University of London have found text messaging prevents one in six patients from forgetting to take, or stopping, their prescribed medicines.

The randomised trial, published today in the journal *PLOS ONE*, tested whether text messaging improved the use of [blood pressure](#) and [cholesterol](#) lowering medication for the prevention of heart attacks and stroke - the most common causes of death worldwide.

Around a third of people do not take their treatment as prescribed, greatly reducing potential benefits and costing the NHS over £500m in wasted medicines and treating avoidable illness. Some patients forget to take their tablets and others stop because of uncertainty over the benefits or harms of treatment.

The INTERACT trial involved 303 patients who had been prescribed blood pressure and/or cholesterol lowering medication. Patients were divided randomly into two groups; a 'text message' group who received periodic text messages and a 'no text' group who received no text messages.

The 'text message' group received texts every day for two weeks, alternate days for two weeks and then weekly for 6 months, asking if they had taken their medication that day. Patients who had not, or did not reply, were telephoned and offered help.

In the 'no text' group, 25% of patients stopped their medication completely or took less than four fifths of their prescribed treatment, compared with only 9% in the 'text message' group.

Professor David Wald, Consultant Cardiologist and Lead Author, Queen Mary University of London, comments: "An important and overlooked problem in medicine is the failure to take prescribed medication. The results of this trial show that [text message](#) reminders help prevent this in a simple and effective way. More than just a reminder, the texts provided the link to identify patients who needed help."

David Taylor, Emeritus Professor of Pharmaceutical and Public Health Policy at UCL, commented: "The health implications of these results are considerable from both an economic and a health gain perspective. Most people now own a mobile phone and text messaging could be coupled with each relevant prescription, preventing several thousand heart attacks and strokes in the UK each year. The method is not limited to cardiovascular disease prevention and could be used for [patients](#) on treatment for other chronic diseases."

More information: *PLOS ONE* [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0114268](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0114268)

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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