AI-based smartphone app can help cut cancer pain severity

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(HealthDay)—An artificial intelligence (AI)-based smartphone app can

reduce the severity of cancer patients' reported pain and hospital admissions, according to a study presented at the annual Palliative and Supportive Care in Oncology Symposium, held from Nov. 16 to 17 in San Diego.

Mihir M. Kamdar, M.D., from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and colleagues developed and evaluated an AI-based smartphone app called ePAL. The authors assigned 56 patients to use the app and 56 to usual care. Those randomly assigned to the app received alerts on their smartphones with daily pain management tips and were prompted to submit their pain levels three days a week. The AI technology distinguishes urgent from nonurgent pain and provides appropriate patient-facing education in real time.

All patients had similar pain scores at the start of the study. The researchers found that for those using the app, pain severity and negative attitudes toward cancer pain treatment decreased significantly versus controls. Additionally, for ePAL users, there were fewer inpatient hospital admissions versus usual care patients (four versus 20), yielding a 69 percent reduction in risk of having a pain-related admission during the study for those who used the app.

"The vast majority of people with cancer experience pain at some point, and we need better tools to track and report it," Joshua Adam Jones, M.D., chair of the 2018 Palliative and Supportive Care in Oncology Symposium News Planning Team, said in a statement. "My hope is that these findings will pave the way for more widespread use of apps among patients who are experiencing pain, so that they can get the support they need."

More information: Press Release
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