

# A simple text could make the difference between life and death

July 3 2019

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A Ph.D. researcher from the University of South Australia is testing whether smartphone text messages can encourage cancer patients to take their oral medication and improve their chances of survival.

The program, developed by Mara Skrabal Ross, hopes to address the poor adherence rates among [cancer patients](#). Currently, less than half (46 percent) adhere to their prescribed [oral medication](#), sometimes leading to fatal consequences.

In adolescents and [young adults](#), this figure is as low as 16 percent.

Skrabal Ross says mobile phones are increasingly being used to help a range of chronically ill patients stick to their treatment regimes, with SMS (text messages) the most common tool for people with diabetes, HIV, heart disease and high blood pressure. Mobile phone applications are also delivering information to patients, collecting real-time data and generating specific reports on a patient's condition.

"In Australia, 85 percent of the population own a [mobile phone](#), as do 67 percent worldwide. Smartphones have successfully been used to improve medication adherence for a range of chronic illnesses, but research into their ability to support regular oral chemotherapy intake is lacking," Skrabal Ross says.

Cancer patients prescribed oral chemotherapy, aged between 16 to 75 years, are being sought for the 10-week study which will inform a larger clinical trial.

Skrabal Ross says 25 percent of drugs approved for cancer are now administered orally, posing new challenges for patients and caregivers who often feel overwhelmed by their [cancer diagnosis](#) and the need to manage their treatment outside of a hospital setting.

"It's crucial to strictly adhere to the oral medication prescribed to ensure patients are giving themselves the best chance of beating cancer. Most oncology practices are not equipped to monitor patients taking oral chemotherapy, so smartphone technology could be the answer."

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: A simple text could make the difference between life and death (2019, July 3) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

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