

Telephone interventions could be used to reduce symptoms of cancer

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Telephone interventions could be used to successfully treat symptoms of cancer such as fatigue, depression and anxiety, new research in the Cochrane Library reports. This could help patients receive the care they need during the current COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face access with medical professionals is limited.

During this unique study researchers from the University of Surrey investigated the effectiveness of [telephone](#) interventions by [medical professionals](#) offering help and support in treating symptoms of cancer. People with cancer often experience a variety of symptoms such as depression, anxiety, sexually related issues and fatigue caused by the disease and its treatment. If not properly treated these can lead to additional problems including difficulties in carrying out everyday tasks, [poor sleep](#), and poor quality of life.

Reviewing 32 previous studies in the field with a total of 6250 participants, researchers found that telephone interventions usually undertaken by nurses (on average three to four calls per [intervention](#)) have potential to reduce symptoms of depression, feelings of anxiety, fatigue and emotional distress. Evidence of the usefulness of telephone interventions for other symptoms, such as uncertainty, pain, sexually-related symptoms, dyspnoea, and general [symptom](#) experience, was limited—mainly due to few studies being conducted in these areas.

Professor Emma Ream, Director of Health Sciences Research at the University of Surrey, said: "Due to increasing pressures on [cancer](#) services in the NHS and the current disruption to services due to COVID-19, it is important that we explore different ways to deliver care to those who need it.

"Telephone interventions delivered by healthcare professionals are one way to do this. Offering care to patients in their own homes is

convenient for them, and can make them more comfortable and possibly more open about their feelings when speaking to professionals. They ultimately will reduce foot traffic in hospitals which is very important at the moment in reducing risks of contracting COVID-19 virus. More research is needed to confirm the effectiveness of such interventions."

More information: undefined undefined et al. Telephone interventions for symptom management in adults with cancer, *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007568.pub2](https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD007568.pub2)

Provided by University of Surrey

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