

Mobile app gives cancer patients better quality of life

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Although comprising only one eighth of the global population, Europe has a quarter of the total number of cancer cases worldwide. Each year, there are around 3.7 million new cancer cases on the continent, and this figure is expected to increase by at least 65 percent in the next 2 decades. The anticipated rise in the number of patients means there will be more people struggling with the symptoms and side effects of their disease. This makes providing better personalized care more and more important.

A mobile-phone-based remote monitoring system developed by the EU-funded ESMART project has shown that it can help improve patients' quality of life by supporting them during their chemotherapy treatment. Called the Advanced Symptom Management System (ASyMS), it monitors cancer patients' symptoms and treatment side effects, helping to improve management of the disease.

How ASyMS works

ASyMS is an [interactive tool](#) that patients can also use when they're going about their daily activities, so they're not confined to their homes. Using a [mobile phone](#), patients complete a questionnaire regarding their chemotherapy symptoms once a day. The secure information is sent to a computer that evaluates the symptoms. If the patient requires medical assistance, an alert is triggered notifying doctors or nurses. The tool provides patients with real-time information that helps them to manage their symptoms at home, without having to travel to a hospital.

Patients are asked questions that include identifying whether they have had any pain, where that pain was located and whether it was new. They're also asked to grade the severity of the pain (mild, moderate or severe), and how much it bothered them (not at all, a little, quite a lot, very much). Other questions identify whether patients are suffering from any side effects of their treatment, such as redness or pain in their hands or feet.

This tool not only benefits patients by making them feel supported, they also aren't put in the position of having to work out for themselves when they need medical assistance. ESMART "demonstrates that [digital tools](#) delivering patient-focused, anticipatory care can be important for patients' quality of life," according to Kathi Apostolidis, president of project partner European Cancer Patient Coalition in Belgium. "Better [symptom](#) management puts the patient back in control of their lives and their disease. It is also advantageous for healthcare systems as it helps patients to stay well at home for as long as possible, thereby preventing costly hospital admissions and inappropriate service use," said Apostolidis in a news item posted on the website of project coordinator University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

ASyMS was tested in a randomized control trial in Austria, Greece, Ireland, Norway and the United

Kingdom. Over 1000 patients were recruited who were undergoing their first course of chemotherapy for breast, bowel and blood cancers and were planning to receive at least 3 cycles of chemotherapy.

The trial showed that ASyMS was able to detect symptoms early and ensured that patients received assistance rapidly when required. ESMART (Randomised controlled trial to evaluate electronic Symptom Management using the Advanced Symptom Management System (ASyMS) Remote Technology for patients with cancers) has demonstrated how patient-focused, anticipatory care via technology can improve outcomes for people with [cancer](#) while also preventing costly hospitalization.

More information: For more information, see www.strath.ac.uk/science/computationsciences/esmart/

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