

Pharmacists' Web-based Care Helps Control Blood Pressure, Especially for Difficult-to-Treat Patients

Twenty-five percent more patients controlled their blood pressure (BP) when they worked with Web-based clinical pharmacists while monitoring their BP at home and receiving patient Web services training compared to patients who simply were encouraged to work with their physicians, according to June 25, 2008, study in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

A clinical pharmacist's involvement also led to 20% more patients controlling their BP when compared to patients who monitored their BP at home and received Web training alone.

Among patients with higher systolic blood pressure, those who received a clinical pharmacist's care, monitored their BP at home, and received Web training had 3.3 times more patients with controlled BP, lower systolic BP, and lower diastolic BP compared to patients who were encouraged to work with their physicians. The study's authors noted this as a particular accomplishment because patients with higher systolic BP are more difficult to treat and have an increased cardiovascular risk.

Under the randomized controlled trial, 778 patients with uncontrolled BP were split into three groups. Two patient groups were trained to monitor their blood pressure and use patient Web services to refill medications, make appointments, view parts of their medical record, and contact health care team members. One of these groups also communicated with a pharmacist electronically every two weeks until their BP was controlled after an initial telephone visit establishing the patient's action plan.

Patients in the third group "were told their BP was not in control and were encouraged to work with their physician to improve it." All patients received a pamphlet on high blood pressure. A total of 730 patients completed the 12-month follow-up visit. The trial took place from June 2005 to December 2007 at 10 medical centers within Group Health, an integrated group practice in Washington State and Idaho.

According to the study's authors, the study showed that home BP monitoring and Web training alone did not significantly improve patients' BP control. Adding a clinical pharmacist's care resulted in improved patient outcomes.

A copy of the full study is available at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/299/24/2857>.

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