

Abstract

Evaluation of use of cell phones to aid compliance with drug therapy for HIV patients

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Background and objectives

Key to the care of people living with HIV is effective data on use of ARVs, their responses to the medication and additional needs. An adaptation of cell phone technology by Cell Life provides an easy to use data-capturing device for use by therapeutic counsellors (home based carers). The objective of the study was to assess how the therapeutic counsellors experienced using the new technology, which had already been shown to improve data capture and organisation of information.

Methods

Individual depth interviews were conducted with all the counsellors working on the project in Guguletu Cape Town using the technology at two points in time, six months apart.

Results

The technology was found to be easy to use especially for those who had previously used a cell phone. It eased data collection considerably and reduced fears around losing patient notes. Improvements in technology between the two set of interviews showed responsiveness from Cell Life to the users of the technology. The patients also responded well to the technology, feeling that it improved their treatment. The major concern for home base carers was the risk of crime due to having a cell phone, which led to the therapeutic counsellors eventually leaving the cell phones at home when visiting patients and would enter the data at a later point. While the carers initially felt that the technology was an intrusion in their lives they later adapted to it.

Conclusions

The therapeutic counsellors found the cell new phone technology easy to use and an acceptable method of collecting data with minimal new problems. A more detailed evaluation of the expanded programme is now required.