Cell Phones Given to People With HIV in Rural Virginia

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Health care providers with the University of Virginia's Infectious Disease Clinic in Charlottesville have piloted a text messaging outreach program in which positive people in rural areas are given cell phones so they can be reminded of pending medical appointments and their medication regime, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reports.

"These patients are very vulnerable, and if they're not in care, they're not getting medications, which likely means they're going to progress to AIDS and unfortunately, probably an earlier death than they should have," said Rebecca Dillingham, an assistant professor at the university's department of medicine. She worked on a similar project in Haiti.

According to the article, patients are given restricted cell phones that are programmed to only receive text messages and call health care providers and emergency contacts. The program, which is funded by a $25,000 grant from the university's Rural Health Care Research Center, plans to follow 20 patients with phones and 10 without through the end of 2009.

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