

Leveraging Digital Tools to Boost Preventive Care Patient Engagement

With [research showing](#) that the COVID-19 pandemic normalized the use of digital technology to facilitate patient-physician interactions, an outreach program piloted at Central Ohio Primary Care used text messaging to encourage and monitor patients in completing colorectal cancer screening.

Through the program, coordinated by physician leader Matthew Skomorowski, MD, patients who received a screening test to complete at home received up to three personalized text messages from their physician. The messages included a reminder of why colorectal cancer screening is important and prompted patients who had not completed the test to detail why. The responses allowed physicians to understand the barriers patients encountered to completing the screening, including losing the test or forgetting to complete it. In an interview, Skomorowski stated that to date, “The pilot has led to a 10% increase in completed screenings.”

Patients recall less than 50% of what was discussed with their doctor during an office visit, but outreach focused on physician and patient engagement may help mitigate that disconnect, according to [research](#) published in 2018 in the journal *PLoS One*. Furthermore, in value-based care, disease prevention and enhanced patient engagement contribute to lowering societal healthcare costs and improved patient care, according to [study findings](#) published in 2019 in the journal *Academic Medicine*. Central Ohio Primary Care’s text-messaging pilot program demonstrates the importance of maintaining patient interaction even after the point-of-care appointment has ended. Using minimal resources, bidirectional text messaging offers an unobtrusive method for physicians and patients to engage with one another and may help physicians succeed in the ongoing transition to value-based care. To learn more about digital technology that can increase patient engagement in preventive care, visit ache.org/about-ache/corporate-partners/sites/exact-sciences.

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