

# Keep Moving Forward!

BY BECKY L. DEKAY, MBA



**F**or Christmas, I was given a Fitbit Flex™ health and fitness tracker. I believe someone is sending me a message! But he's right—I need to get moving, eat better, and drink

more water! This gift made me start thinking about how cancer care providers can use technology to help patients stay physically active (when possible) and, more importantly, keep track of their medications. So I did some research.

Most everyone has a cell phone these days; many of which are “smart phones.” One way to put this technology to work for cancer patients is to ask them to take a picture of all of their medications and bring it with them to their next appointment. Our patients are doing this now and enjoy not having to lug around a paper or plastic bag filled with pills.

Then my thoughts turned to issues around oral chemotherapy. Since the introduction of oral agents, many providers have voiced concerns, such as: *How do we know how much of the drug was administered? Is the patient taking the correct dose? Is the patient taking the medication on time? Is the patient adhering to the treatment regimen? Is the patient taking “holidays” or breaks from the medication?*


My research turned up a number of apps, ranging from free to those with a one-time charge between \$1 and \$3, including Pill Alert, Pill Pro, Med Reminder, Med Helper, Pill Control, and Pill Manager. Many apps include alarms that can be used to “remind” patients when it is time to take their medication. There is also a start-up company that has developed a wireless pill bottle that alerts patients when they have to take their meds and keeps track of their usage and dosage; however, this technology is on the pricey side and distribution is in question. I'd love to hear if anyone is using this type of technology in their program as I'd like to implement something similar for our patients. And, of course, ACCC has just released its mobile resource, Oral

Therapies—A Patient-Centered Approach, to help cancer care teams assess and support their patients with oral adherence, including identifying areas where additional education and support may be needed.

Next, I thought about fitness from the patient perspective. While hundreds of apps are available, I focused on free ones, such as Walk the Walk, Walk-Pedometer Step Counter, Walkspree Inspire, Bike and Walk, Bike Free, Bike Coach, etc. Other apps can help cancer patients track their weight or participate in yoga, meditation, or Pilates. Again, patients can use alarm features on these apps to remind them when it's time to exercise or meditate.

I am not promoting one specific application over another and only listed the ones above because they are free. Instead, I am suggesting that providers begin to investigate ways to use technology that is readily available to help our patients participate more fully in their care, including guiding our patients in the appropriate and safe use of technology.

In my short time using Fitbit, I've found myself more motivated and willing to try and reach my daily goals. Now, will these types of tools, apps, and programs encourage our patients? I don't know, but I think it's worth a try!

Before I close out my last “President's Message,” I'd like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve you as ACCC President. To me, there is nothing more inspiring than working and networking with others who share my passion for improving the care and quality for cancer patients. In 2003 Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach, then director of the National Cancer Institute, issued a challenge goal of eliminating death and suffering from cancer by 2015. Obviously, we did not meet that challenge—but not for lack of trying! New and improved treatments and cures are available and great strides have been made. But your passion continues to be critical in the War on Cancer. Persevere, and together we will triumph! 

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