# Digital bridges: How mobile applications foster social relationships for patients living with cancer

To the Editor,

Sir,
Digital health technology has transformed patient-centered care, particularly in supporting patients living with cancer.[1] Digital health covers a wide range of approaches, such as mobile health apps (mHealth), health information systems, wearable devices, telehealth and telemedicine, as well as personalized medicine. In particular, mHealth plays a key role by providing patients with convenient access to health resources and real-time support via mobile devices.[2] One area where this technology shows great promise is in enhancing social relationships of patients. Social relationships, based on mutual influence, can be analyzed structurally by the size and frequency of a person's social network and functionally by the quality of interactions, including social support and experiences of loneliness or social distress.[3]

In this context, mHealth applications are now crucial for providing social support and resources to patients living with cancer. Designed to address both clinical and emotional needs, these apps mimic social media to facilitate meaningful interactions, personal sharing, and mutual encouragement, effectively connecting patients with similar experiences and fostering a sense of belonging. Moreover, peer support programs within these apps help patients build strong, supportive communities crucial for their emotional well-being. Such tools are invaluable in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are common challenges faced by living with cancer.[4]

Given the established correlation between robust social relationships and decreased psychological distress, as well as improved physical health outcomes,[5] it is imperative to delve deeper into the development of mHealth applications tailored to bolster social relationships. Targeted exploration in this domain is essential to ensure that these applications not only meet medical needs but also actively promote the emotional and social well-being of patients. Bridging this gap is critical for fully leveraging the potential of mHealth technology in delivering comprehensive, holistic cancer care.

## Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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