

Impact of mobile phone usage on social loneliness

B-J. LIANG, G. CHEN. Impact of mobile phone usage on social loneliness of elderly in Beijing. Gerontechnology 2014; 13(2):245; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.044.00 **Purpose** Using a mobile phone has become an essential activity for the elderly community. With improvements in mobile phone technology, the elderly can communicate with their children or friends conveniently, which can improve their life satisfaction and subjective well-being^{1,2}. This paper aims to describe changes in the elderly's use of mobile phones in 2010 and measure the association between use of mobile phones and social loneliness³. **Method** Based on the 2010 "Survey of the Older Population in Rural and Urban Beijing", this paper focuses on a descriptive analysis of use of mobile phone to analyze older people's changing behaviors and then discusses the association between their mobile phone usage and social loneliness. Mobile phones can help the elderly obtain information and establish connections. This paper introduces the concept of 'social loneliness' as the most important reference of connection between the elderly and the society, and it has been operated as a subjective feeling question, namely the dependent variable. **Results & Discussion** According to data analysis, mobile phones have become popular among the elderly. Only 44.3% of the elderly used mobile phones in 2006, but the number increased to 68.6% in 2010. As shown in *Table 1*, when demographic variables were controlled, mobile phone usage has a significant impact on social loneliness of the elderly. The more often old people use mobile phones, the less social loneliness they feel. The result shows that the necessity of using mobile phones for the elderly. N=3281; *p<0.05,**p<0.01,*** p<0.001 ; Reference groups are shown in parentheses

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*Table 1. Impact of mobile phone usage on social loneliness as tested in negative binomial regression; n=3281; *p<0.05; **p<0.01***; p<0.001; Reference groups are shown in parentheses*

Variable	B	Exp(B)
Use of mobile phone (no)		
yes	-0.281*	0.755
Age	0.002	1.002
Sex (male)		
female	0.082	0.921
Education (primary school or below)		
junior high / technical secondary school	0.341**	1.406
senior high school	0.500**	1.649
university or above	0.573***	1.773
Marital status (married with spouse present)		
widowed	-0.806***	0.447
divorced	-1.513***	0.220
unmarried	-1.174*	0.309
Location (rural)		
urban	-0.680***	0.115