

*The influence of educational level on the use of mobile phones*

T. MARQUINE RAYMUNDO, M. SOARES BERNARDES, M. RIBEIRO MARQUES, C. DA SILVA SANTANA. **The influence of educational level on the use of mobile phones by older people.** *Gerontechnology* 2014; 13(2):261; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.194.00 **Purpose** The use of technology in old age can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as access, cost, educational level, socioeconomic status, cognitive skills, attitude and acceptance<sup>1</sup>. This study aimed, through the comparison of two groups of older people, to identify the influence of years of education on the use of mobile phones. **Method** This is a cross-sectional, comparative and quantitative and qualitative study. The sample was intentionally selected for convenience, and the older participants in this study were derived from a Digital Inclusion Project for older people developed by the Medical School of Ribeirao Preto University of Sao Paulo. For data collection two instruments were used: (i) a socioeconomic questionnaire with information regarding education and other variables such as age, income, gender, occupation, and marital status, and (ii) a questionnaire rating the use of electronic devices, which included questions concerning the use of devices, frequency and difficulty of use, type of difficulty and strategies for problem resolution. A descriptive statistical method was used for data analysis that aims to describe the data (a sample or a population), and may include verifying the representativeness or lack of data, as well as sorting and compiling the data in tables, creating figures and obtaining functional relations<sup>2</sup>. The subjects were divided into two groups of older people, one poorly educated (LE), who had less than eight years of formal education, and one well educated (HE), who had 15 or more years of formal education. **Results & Discussion** The HE and LE groups both consisted of 17 women and two men each, totaling 38 subjects. In the LE and HE groups, the mean age was 72 and 69, respectively. Regarding the use of mobile phones, 100% of subjects in the HE group and 63% of the LE group reported using these devices (*Table 1*). In this study, older people with higher levels of education reported they often used mobile phones; however, the frequency of the use and the difficulties in handling the device was similar between the two groups, except for the use of other menu functions, such as accessing the internet, activating and deactivating the alarm, and changing settings. To summarize, this result shows that schooling influences the subjects' ability to understand and explore the functions of the devices, and is not limited to only the basics. Furthermore, we observed differences in strategies adopted to solve the problems, since the more educated group used trial and error and handled the equipment well, and thus had greater independence.

**References**

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**Address:** Ribeirao Preto Medical School, University of Sao Paulo, Ribeirao Preto, Brazil  
**E:** taiuani@usp.br

*Table 1. Percentages who used mobile phones (n=38)*

Phone use		Education	
		High (HE)	Low (LE)
Mobile phone use		100,0	63,0
Frequency of use	Never	0,0	5,3
	Once a month	10,5	0,0
	Once a week	5,3	5,3
	Two to three times a week	10,5	21,0
	Daily	63,2	31,6
Degree of difficulty	No difficulty	5,3	0,0
	Some difficulty	47,4	31,6
	Difficulty	42,0	31,6
	Sending text messages	47,4	47,4
	Other menu functions	36,9	68,4
Strategies used	Other	21,5	21,1
	Ask someone for help	31,6	36,9
	Read the manual	15,8	5,3
	Trial and error	36,6	15,8
	No answer	31,6	52,6