



September 10, 2007

Companies Test Mobile Devices for Chronic Condition Management

A variety of technology companies are developing and testing portable devices that can help monitor chronic conditions such as diabetes, the *East Bay Business Times* reports.

The Palo Alto Medical Foundation received a \$1.2 million grant from the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to test a device that can transfer data from glucometers to cell phones to diabetes patients' electronic health records. The device was developed by iMetrikus, Palm, Epic Systems, Sprint and LifeScan.

The three-year study will begin in October and measure the technology's effect on the hemoglobin A1C level, blood pressure and cholesterol of 400 patients, the *Business Times* reports.

"The use of mobile phones to manage diabetes hasn't been well-tested in large trials, and there are a couple of different models of how to do it," said James Ralston, an affiliate assistant professor of health services at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine who is also running two small trials of a similar device through a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant.

Ralston said one model is to develop an application that monitors the patient and the other is used in conjunction with a health provider to teach the patient to manage a condition.

In contrast, HealthPia America, which offers a device that can monitor patients and send the information to a range of recipients, wants to stay away from the disease management business.

HealthPia's GlucoPhone, which combines a glucometer with a cell phone, is being used by fewer than 100 patients nationwide since FDA granted it premarket approval last year. HealthPia charges \$79 as part of an introductory package for its GlucoPhone, as long as patients also pay for the service from its selected telephone carrier, LogicMobile. Patients also have to purchase testing strips that must be used in conjunction with the phone, although Medicare reimburses patients for the strips.

BeWell Mobile Technology also is working on technology for diabetes patients and has conducted a pilot study on using cell phone text messages to help teens at San Mateo Medical Center in San Mateo, Calif., manage their asthma. The study was conducted with funding from the California HealthCare Foundation.

"In 10 years, I see (these devices) as part of the standard of how care is delivered" for chronic conditions, Veenu Aulakh, senior program officer with CHCF's Better Chronic Disease Care program, said.

Barriers to the adoption of these devices include technical problems with interoperability and affordability, the *Business Times* reports (Hogarth, *East Bay Business Times*, 9/7).

CHCF is the publisher of *iHealthBeat*.

© 1998-2007. All Rights Reserved. iHealthBeat is published daily for
The California HealthCare Foundation by The Advisory Board Company.