There’s an App for That

Sean Fenske

I have yet to hop aboard the smart phone bandwagon. While I realize there are a number of benefits, to me, it still seems like a pricey way to access my e-mail and Facebook when I’m not home in front of my desktop computer. And really, I still don’t yet need that ability.

However, as I said, I do realize there are numerous other benefits that make them worthwhile for a number of people. And those benefits continue to grow in number daily, attracting more and more users every time their contracts expire.

Seemingly in lock-step with the smart phone adoption explosion, I regularly receive e-mails about new apps being released that will offer some sort of medical benefit to patients. While medicine moving in this direction is not really that surprising to anyone and really, it was only a matter of time before we moved another step closer to those Star Trek handheld medical tools anyway, there are some questions involved. And I’m not speaking of FDA questions, since the FDA has said that these apps fall under Class I device rules, not Class III as they had initially when medical device apps first started appearing on the market. While the FDA still needs to get its ducks in a row on approvals for medical device apps, they are surprisingly in a fair position and not lagging horribly behind.

The questions that I think medical device/smart phone apps bring up are those involved with patients and their doctors. Are patients going to look at their medical device apps as a substitute for their healthcare provider? Will they look to these

devices even more should the cost of seeing their doctor continue to rise? Isn’t a one-time payment for a medical device app better for them financially than several co-pays to their physician?

Further, what about doctors who are not as quick to adapt to “app healthcare” as their patients? Will they inform their patients that they aren’t looking at their readings each week when they arrive from an app? The app can send data to the patient’s doctor but it can’t make the doctor read the information.

Finally, what about security? The concern over the safety of medical data that is being transmitted by medical devices and even the concern over the medical devices themselves being secure is constantly in question. Why would anyone think these apps will be any different? As adoption continues to grow, so will the concerns.

While I’m excited to see the potential for the healthcare industry that these medical device smartphone apps offer, I am also curious to see how they are received as they grow in use. I’m also curious to see how the healthcare industry incorporates them into patients’ healthcare regimens. And as always, I will keep an eye on the FDA to see if any changes come from them with regard to these apps.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/26/2015 - 6:28am*):
http://www.mdtmag.com/blogs/2012/10/there%E2%80%99s-app?qt-most_popular=0&qt-video_of_the_day=0