

Leanne West of Georgia Tech Reflects on TEDMED 2013

In the [TEDMED](#) tradition, great minds come together to collaborate, be inspired, and discuss the future of healthcare. Leanne West, Director of the [Landmarc Research Center](#) at the Georgia Tech Research Institute and a guest of Steelcase Health at TEDMED, was one of those great minds in attendance in Washington DC last week.

The highlight of her time at TEDMED was being around [the Hive](#). “The speakers were great,” she said. “But networking and conversing with people in the Hive was awesome. Having that one-on-one connection was really worthwhile.”

The part of the Hive most relevant to her work at Georgia Tech was the Smartphone Physical (SPP). Working a lot with sensors and the development of medical devices at Georgia Tech, she is very familiar with the different apps and accessories used in the SPP, and it was because of this experience that she was the perfect candidate to examine it from an insider’s vantage point.

By experiencing the technology as a patient might, she could really see the usefulness and convenience: “The way the different aspects of the Smartphone Physical allow for a quicker and more continuous feedback loop with one’s doctor is really amazing. I got my eyes scanned and the physician was able to quickly detect the cataract in one of my eyes and the intraocular lens in the other.”

West has been on the bandwagon of a so-called ‘virtual doctor’ for years in her work at Georgia Tech, and the Smartphone Physical is exactly what she had envisioned. “It’s so convenient and easy to use your smartphone for all of these tests. Think about how this could transform lives in rural areas – people could just email a result rather than have to drive a long distance,” she said.

Like [Roz Cama](#), whom we spoke to last week, West appreciated that the Empath chair she sat in for the tests kept her more engaged than a typical exam room table. “I felt more relaxed being at eye-level with the physician, rather than perched up on the awkward exam table. It was more conducive to having an actual conversation and – bonus! – didn’t have that weird tissue paper covering it.”

Being at the same height as the physician was beneficial as well in that she could easily see images on the smartphone as the tests were being conducted. The physician also didn’t have to constantly be turning his back to type notes into the computer, he could do it all there on his phone.

“A picture truly is worth a thousand words,” West said. “Being able to see the images on the phone really made the explanation from the doctor sink in. Seeing is believing”.

Being in the Hive was a boon for West as well. She was able to charge her technology using [Regard](#), and could network with the eclectic TEDMED crowd as they shuffled through on their way to their Smartphone Physical.

“I could definitely see the tenets of the Smartphone Physical adopted over the next 5 to 10 years,” West predicted. “Patient-centered care is the way of the future. Soon everyone will be using this technology in meetings with their doctor.”

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