

Mobile Health Apps Help Patients Track Care

While the jury is still out on the overall effectiveness of current mobile apps (see [Mobile Apps Fail First Check-up, But Future Is Bright](#)) one fact is true — mobile health apps provide smartphone users with the opportunity to better track their care, as was reported in the recent post [Could a Smartphone Be The Future of Medicine?](#) . So how can apps work to improve communication between patients and caregivers?

With more than 40,000 apps to choose from, consumers have a bevy of options. However, it's the 17,000+ applications specific to helping to manage chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease and stroke that seem to be taking center stage.

The Cambridge, Mass.-based New England Health Institute (NEHI), a national health policy institute, has identified [11 emerging technologies](#) in a report titled "Getting to Value: Eleven Chronic Disease Technologies to Watch" that it believes have the potential to improve care and lower costs for chronic disease patients, especially those in at-risk populations:

- Tele-Stroke Care
- Virtual Visits
- Mobile Asthma Management Tools
- In-Car Telehealth
- Extended Care eVisits
- Mobile Clinical Decision Support
- Medication Adherence Tools
- Social Media Promoting Health
- Mobile Cardiovascular Tools
- Home Telehealth
- Mobile Diabetes Management Tools

The advantage of mobile apps is the **empowerment of the patient to monitor their own care**. The NEHI's report expands personal healthcare management from mobile apps to include social networking and home-based telehealth technologies. These technologies also include "web-based platforms that enable patients to connect virtually to their physician through their smartphone or personal computer, cell phone apps for medication reminders and asthma control, and in-car wireless systems that monitor patients' health while they are driving."

In [this video](#), Dr. Mark Blatt, Worldwide Medical Director at Intel, talks with Aetna Vice President Martha Wofford about the future of consumer healthcare apps, how to improve access to care, and using the resulting data from these apps to improve outcomes:

These new technologies bring hope to those who live with disease, and really anyone and everyone trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle. As mobile apps continue to gain popularity and enhance functionality, the true value will come from the implementation of these tools. Today, the discussion centers around the type of apps available and those which are in development. Soon the discussion will move toward accurate patient usage and the increase in quality of care.

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