

Could Ford make mobile healthcare a standard feature?

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By now you've no doubt read about the Ford Motor Company's [intriguing move into the world of mobile healthcare](#). With the help of medical technology companies WellDoc, Medtronic and SDI, Ford, last Wednesday, set out to prove that it's concerned not only with the number of drivers it boasts, but the health of those drivers, as well.



In a phone interview with *FierceMobileHealthcare*, WellDoc President and Chief Operating Officer Dr. Anand Iyer, whose company showed off its DiabetesManager service—which would work in correlation with the automaker's voice-activated in-care connectivity system SYNC via the cloud—said he believes that the demonstration is the beginning of a new trend.

"In the future, it's not going to be called 'mHealth,' it's just going to all be called 'health,'" Iyer said. "The phone, the car, the tablets, the television—these are all going to be implicit parts of the solution."

For WellDoc users, specifically, the technology would kick in the moment a driver turns on the car, according to Iyer. Data stored via DiabetesManager after a morning blood sugar check would automatically be transferred to the car, which then would check in with the driver about their condition via SYNC.

"If my blood sugar level was low, the car would actually talk to me, essentially saying 'hey Anand, just wanted to check in with you; an hour ago your blood sugar was 72. Why don't you test it again?'" Iyer said. "If my earlier test were more positive, it would acknowledge that, as well."

Medtronic's offering, meanwhile—a continuous glucose monitor—would help drivers monitor their blood glucose levels via Bluetooth technology also paired with SYNC. SDI's iPhone Allergy app would connect with SYNC via AppLink, providing location based day-by-day index levels for pollen, ultraviolet rays, etc., for asthma and allergy sufferers.



Dr. Anand Iyer -
President and COO,
WellDoc

Ford also announced today that its European team—in conjunction with the Aachen, Germany-based Innovation and Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH) Aachen University—has developed a [heart rate monitoring seat](#) that uses six embedded electrode sensors to detect impulses of the heart. Such technology, according to Ford European Research and Innovation Centre medical officer Dr. Achim Lindner, has the potential to alert drivers of "imminent cardiovascular issues," including a heart attack.

Iyer likens all of the developments to the evolution of the airbag and the seatbelt, indicating that he thinks, over time, they could even become standard features.

"I'm sure people rolled their eyes when the seatbelt was introduced, saying 'do you really need it?,'" Iyer said. "Today you wouldn't think about manufacturing or driving a car without seatbelts. [The airbag and the seatbelt] were targeted to certain markets, then they became de-facto standard, and then they became regulated."

Currently, no mainstream deployment strategy exists for any of the mobile health technologies demonstrated. Still, Iyer said that while that day might not arrive for another year or two, he's excited that it's now become a possibility.

"I think we've crossed the feasibility phase—the 'yeah, it can be done' segment—and viability—the right business go-to market model—is the next step," he said. "I think this, in many ways, was the tipping point for us to say that it can be done."

For more information:

- here's Ford's initial [announcement](#)
- check out Ford's [latest news release](#) about heart rate monitoring
- here's a [related video](#) about the heart rate monitoring seat
- read through this [handout](#) showing how the different technologies work (.pdf)