



Toyota demos ECG sensing steering wheel

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It appears that more than one carmaker believes the automobile to be the next “platform” for health services: Toyota is developing an ECG embedded within a car’s steering wheel, reports MedGadget. The feature is part of many in-development safety technologies the company showed during a demonstration in Japan last week. Contact sensors within the steering wheel, featuring a single-lead ECG signal, will detect abnormal heart rhythm through the driver’s hands. Toyota showed off a Prius model that showed the driver’s heart rate and ECG on the in-car navigation system display.

In May Paul Mascarenas, the Chief Technology Officer at Ford Research and Innovation, predicted that health services would become increasingly important at Ford: “We see health and wellness as a core area for us moving forward,” he said.

Thanks to research projects with Medtronic, WellDoc, SDI and others, Ford has architected three ways for mobile health services to interact with its cars: Bluetooth connectivity between the car’s computer and personal medical devices, remote access to cloud services via the car’s computer, and synching up health apps users already have on their smartphones.

Ford is also developing a heart rate sensor system embedded in the car seat that doesn’t require skin contact.

The demo from Toyota makes clear that Ford is not the only car maker eyeing healthcare. While the Toyota system is intended to alert drivers to serious heart conditions, Toyota also envisions using it as a daily health check.