

## Social Media

SOCIAL MEDIA  
TRENDS, REGS,  
AND APPS

By Robin Robinson

## Mobile health apps get more mileage with in-car connectivity

**TREND WATCH:** Carmakers and healthcare companies collaborate for better disease management.

### SDI, WellDoc, and Medtronic partner with Ford to synch apps with car dashboard controls

Ford Motor Co. and several healthcare companies are collaborating to bring disease management apps to drivers' dashboards, allowing them to take health information and tools they need on the road. As the number of people who use smartphones while driving rises, so does the concern about road safety. By bringing mobile apps to driver-friendly, voice-activated dashboard controls, the theory is drivers will be safer than trying to access apps on their smartphones. Ford was the first carmaker to produce the **SYNC SYSTEM**, which has been installed in 3 million cars. A second version has just been launched.

Ford is working with **SDI, Medtronic,** and **WellDoc** to determine what opportunities are available for synching apps with dashboards. SDI has developed an iPhone allergy alert app for Ford's dashboard Sync in-car connectivity system. The **ALLERGY ALERT** smartphone app, developed by SDI as a supplement to its pollen.com website, is available on iPhone and iPads and has racked up more than 1 million users. The Allergy Alert app gives drivers voice-controlled access to location-based forecasts for four different conditions: allergy (pollen), asthma, cold and cough, and ultraviolet sensitivity. In-car access to this type of information can help asthma and allergy sufferers plan healthier route choices and prepare for areas with high-symptom triggers that might lead to an attack.

"SDI's Allergy Alert is an example of on-demand information that can be accessed safely by consumers with specific conditions and who can use the information immediately to help plan their day and their family's day, all while simply using their voice to command the application," says Jody Fisher, VP of Marketing of SDI. "Applications such as Allergy Alert fulfill the demand for information in the moment and hold the potential to even save lives."

SDI expects production of the product to begin later this year.

Ford has also partnered with Medtronic to ex-



plore ways to help make chronic diseases more manageable through advanced mobile healthcare technology. The app in development would connect to glucose monitoring devices, diabetes management services, asthma management tools, and Web-based allergen alert solutions.

"Developing what we call 'connectivity solutions,' technologies that help people with diabetes and their loved ones more conveniently manage diabetes, is a priority at Medtronic," says Karrie Hawbaker, public relations manager, Medtronic, Diabetes. "We have an entire team of people focused on bringing these tools to market. The in-car health and wellness solution that Ford and Medtronic are discussing is an early-stage concept and just one of many connectivity solutions we're exploring."

WellDoc, a healthcare company that develops technology solutions to improve chronic disease management outcomes and reduce healthcare costs, has entered into a research partnership with Ford that will provide patients with tools to maintain their daily routines even while on the road. People with diabetes can enter their data such as medications, exercise, and diet information through speech-to-text interaction while in their Ford vehicle. The WellDoc software-based system will also allow healthcare providers to access their WellDoc clinical decision support records while they're in the office, on their mobile device, or in the car.

The integration will allow patients to use the DiabetesManager System to help treat high and low blood sugars, as well as make positive, behav-

ioral-based choices in real time.

Advanced features, still in development, include leveraging Ford Sync's location-based services to help drivers not only identify and find restaurants, but also assist them in making proper food choices at the restaurant.

"To cope with competitive pressure, demand for increased quality, and healthcare's decentralization, big pharma must go

beyond the pill to provide greater value," says Chris Bergstrom, chief strategy and commercial officer at WellDoc. "Mobile health services can complement pills and medical devices when they are clinically validated and deployed effectively. The car is just one great example because your health doesn't stay at home when you drive, and in fact, it often becomes more important to manage while on the road."

According to Ms. Fisher at SDI, these first forays into the healthcare app space are only the beginning.

"There is an ongoing race between telecommunications platforms to gain a foothold for a share of consumers' minds while in the car," Ms. Fisher says. "With more than 17,000 healthcare applications on iTunes alone, there will be a great opportunity to marry appropriate healthcare information with those car manufacturers that have the foresight to recognize the power that information can bring to consumers while they are driving."

Just as there are already applications that measure gas prices, weather, and geographic points of interest, quality healthcare information could be brought to consumers to help them find an appropriate healthcare provider, a pharmacy, or even potentially receive lifesaving healthcare reminders on-demand, she says.

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