

# THE BURRILL REPORT

## WellDoc Rings Up Success with Diabetes Management App

Trial of WellDoc system shows positive results, but potential barriers remain

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A year of customized lifestyle coaching provided to type 2 diabetes patients via mobile phones and the web helped them better manage their diabetes, a new study reports.

The research, published in the journal [Diabetes Care](#), showed that mobile health management software created by Baltimore-based WellDoc could make a statistically significant difference in average blood sugar levels. The results were from what was the first randomized clinical trial of a mobile phone-based diabetes coaching and decision support tool conducted over a one-year treatment period.

“The widespread distribution of mobile phones and electronic communication, across socioeconomic, sex, and age-groups, combined with the ability to process and communicate data in real time, make these modalities ideal platforms to create simple, effective, diabetes management programs,” wrote researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, which coordinated the study.

The patient-coaching system included a mobile diabetes management software app for logging self-care data, including blood glucose values, carbohydrate intake, medications, and other diabetes management information. The app was then supplemented by a web portal, featuring a secure messaging center for communicating with doctors, a personal health record with additional diabetes information, a learning library, and a logbook to review historical data.

The researchers found that mobile phone-based treatment/behavioral coaching intervention resulted in improved glycated hemoglobin by 1.9 percent compared to 0.7 percent for the usual care alone.

The researchers did not see convincing improvements in patient-reported diabetes symptoms, diabetes distress, depression, clinical values such as blood pressure, or laboratory values such as lipid levels. And although the study was designed to address potential selection biases, the researchers also advised caution in generalizing their findings, since the doctors involved have different experiences with and access to resources.

By helping patients better manage disease, WellDoc’s system and those like it may eventually help put a dent in the more than \$100 billion spent annually on the direct medical costs of diabetes in the United States, one of the major reasons that WellDoc and the study have drawn support from insurers, such as CareFirst Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Maryland.

“Ultimately,” says Jon Shematek, senior vice president and chief medical officer for CareFirst, “by making lasting improvements in care coordination and quality we can better control costs for the health industry as a whole.”