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In NVAF patients, **What characteristics do you look for in a treatment option?**

A: To reduce risk of ischemic stroke
B: Demonstrated safety profile
C: No INR testing
D: All of the above

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Endocrinology

Will Docs Write Rx for Apps?

Published: Jan 16, 2014 | Updated: Jan 16, 2014

By [Kristina Fiore](#), Staff Writer, MedPage Today

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Doctors can now write scripts for the first prescription-only app -- but the question remains whether they'll [pick up a prescription pad to write for mobile technology](#).

The app, [BlueStar](#), is a tracker for patients with diabetes. It analyzes logged blood glucose data and offers advice based on trends it detects -- such as telling patients to adjust their diets based on sugar levels after meals. Clinicians also receive a report on their patients' progress.

Parent company [WellDoc just won \\$20 million in venture financing](#) for the app, and the company has a track record of success with online disease management tools and applications. WellDoc's argument is that better blood sugar control will lead to better patients outcomes, and, thus, less spending on healthcare in the long run.

FDA approved the BlueStar app in 2010 as a device, but the company's strategy has recently focused on insurance and reimbursement. In June, WellDoc announced that BlueStar would be reimbursed as a pharmacy benefit for employees of a handful of top companies, including Ford Motor Company, RiteAid, and DexCom.

Only a handful of apps has been approved since the [FDA's social media guidance was released in September](#), but experts suspect that more app companies may be moving in the direction of requiring prescriptions in order to monetize their efforts.

Patrick Brady, a spokesperson for WellDoc, told *MedPage Today* that the program is out in full force and doctors are currently writing prescriptions for BlueStar.

Patients whose health plans don't cover BlueStar can get the app by working with a customer advocacy team at WellDoc, he added. The team coordinates directly with the patient's physician to negotiate with insurers.

In a statement from when the BlueStar app was launched in June, [Richard Bergenstal, MD](#), a past president of the American Diabetes Association, said that in the "era of healthcare reform, it's important that payers recognize that patients must have access to proven, novel digital tools."

Many other clinicians contacted by *MedPage Today* said they'd feel comfortable writing a prescription for an app.

"I have looked at some of the data supporting the role of technology like this in the management of diabetes, and I think it may be the [wave] of the future," said [Fernando Ovalle, MD](#), an endocrinologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

[David Katz, MD](#), of Yale's Prevention Research Center, said he would feel comfortable writing the script provided patients were comfortable using it. "Overall, the literature suggests that extending our reach with technology that allows patient coaching to be continuous between office visits can be very effective," Katz said.

Johnson Thomas, MD, an endocrinology fellow in New York City who developed an [endocrinology reference app called Endo Tools](#), also said patient comfort would be a major factor, since "not all patients are tech-savvy."


Still, he said if the app can deliver "timely, actionable advice" to patients in order to achieve better glucose control, it would be worth it.

[Sue Kirkman, MD](#), of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said a prescription app could be helpful, but its usefulness may be limited in that the patients "who want the app and are willing to enter data and respond to prompts may already be the more proactive ones."

Kirkman added that she hopes potential insurer reimbursement for apps opens the door wider to support of reimbursement for self-management tools such as contact with diabetes educators.

"Right now, pretty much only face-to-face visits are covered, not the ongoing contacts by phone, fax, email, etc., that are really needed to help someone sustain behavior changes and self-manage their diabetes optimally," she said.

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