

How healthcare clients are utilising wearables to track patient health information

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Wearable technology has been around for a long time. When pedometers, which date back to Leonardo da Vinci, were combined with smartphone applications, the wearable movement saw its first glimpse of success in the fitness and wellness sectors. The new interest and advancement in sensors led to wearables that can accurately track activity, heart rate, and sleep. Over time, it became apparent that the novelty of these devices tended to wear off within the first six months. Many were predicting that the wearable fitness trackers would be a passing fad. Then Fitbit enhanced the customer engagement by adding elements of gamification and community. Fitbit's very successful IPO speaks for itself, and the healthcare industry can learn a lot from the trials of the fitness and wellness wearables, says Daniel Piekarz, VP of Business Development, **Life Sciences**.

Initially, people assumed doctors would want to see their patient's activity data but, that never really caught on. Activity monitoring is simply not necessary for many conditions, and neither is the constant tracking of sleep or heart rate. Typically asking a patient if they have been sleeping well, and checking their vitals during a visit is enough data for the doctor to address basic health care. However, this does not mean wearables are useless in healthcare. We are still in the early stages of how healthcare is managed and, wearables combined with mHealth applications are at the center of it. Fitness tracker successes have influenced the direction most healthcare wearables are going. Yet, this is not the good thing as many of the **FDA** approved wearable devices are just glorified fitness trackers that measure activities and vitals more accurately. While this can be helpful in certain situations where 24x7 monitoring is needed, these devices are just scratching the surface of what can be done with wearables.

Some companies like Amgen are taking steps forward by developing a wearable drug delivery system. Their Neulasta Wearable Delivery Kit injects post-chemotherapy medicine 27 hours after chemo is administered. This eliminates a doctor visit on the day when the patient tends to feel very sick due to chemo while at the same time ensures delivery of the medication at the exact time necessary. Wearable drug delivery systems will continue to advance and start to use information gathered from the person's body to determine optimal dose and schedule.

While not the typical device one thinks of when thinking of wearables, insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors have greatly helped diabetics. Some forward thinking patients have already used these preexisting devices to hack together a bionic pancreas, the first wearable organ. These early versions are obviously not FDA approved, and patients are taking their lives into their own hand, yet these pioneers are paving the way to a single user-friendly wearable organ that comes just short of curing diabetes. The key to healthcare wearables in the future is not just data collection but, it's about building communication mechanisms between the body and machines that will allow wearables to augment our bodies' own abilities to heal itself.

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