

[IMAGE]

## Could an App Save Your Life

By Editorial Staff

The more than 700 million iPhone users have just been given the opportunity to "do their part to advance medical research." Apple has released ResearchKit, "an open-source software framework that makes it easy for researchers and developers to create apps that could revolutionize medical studies, potentially transforming medicine forever." As Apple explains it:

"Hundreds of millions of people around the world have an iPhone in their pocket. Each one is equipped with powerful processors and advanced sensors that can track movement, take measurements, and record information – functions that are perfect for medical studies. The sheer number of them being used across the globe opens up new possibilities for researchers. With ResearchKit, researchers can easily create apps that take advantage of iPhone features to gather new types of data on a scale never available before."

In essence, Apple's ResearchKit will utilize the vast number of iPhone users to provide much larger databases – and over larger geographic areas – for almost every health condition experienced in everyday life. Patients are being asked to become partners in finding solutions for their ailments, with very little required besides downloading an app and utilizing it to monitor their health.

There are many forms of daily activity an iPhone can measure – all in real time, throughout the day, in objective fashion. Specific apps for specific ailments are already being developed with the assistance of major medical research universities. Currently, there are ResearchKit apps for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, breast cancer and Parkinson's disease.

health care - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The Parkinson's disease app has a "tap test" to measure hand tremors and a voice "ahhhh test" to measure voice tremors. The "walk test" directs you to walk 20 steps in one direction, turn around, walk back and stand still. The accelerometer and gyroscope in the iPhone precisely measure gait and balance.

The apps also measure activity levels. This allows data to be collected about how exercise and activity impact your health and ailments. Best of all, you get to see the test results and better understand how your daily activities are impacting your health.

These apps also could have a tremendous impact on the nutritional side of patient health. The diabetes app already looks at glucose levels. This could easily be expanded to include lab tests that require a very small blood sample you could provide and measure at home. Over the years, data on people who focus on meeting their nutritional needs and eating appropriately could begin to demonstrate the long-term benefits of good nutrition.

In case you are wondering, the Apple folks are very serious about the privacy of the data. Patients get to decide how their data is shared and Apple has made the commitment that it "will not see your data." Hopefully, the same commitment will be made as apps are developed for other devices.

Sound like something you're not ready for? Get ready, because this is where health care is going – it has to.

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