



TECH

iPhone into the one-stop shop for all your medical info

- Apple wants the iPhone to become the central bank for health information.
- It is looking to host clinical information, such as labs and allergy lists, and not just wellness data.
- To that end, it is talking to hospitals, researching potential acquisitions and attending health IT industry meetings.

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Imagine turning to your iPhone for all your health and medical information -- every doctor's visit, lab test result, prescription and other health information, all available in a snapshot on your phone and shared with your doctor on command. No more logging into hospital web sites or having to call your previous doctor to get them to forward all that information to your new one.

Apple is working on making that scenario a reality.

CNBC has learned that a secretive team within Apple's growing health unit has been in talks with developers, hospitals and other industry groups about bringing clinical data, such as detailed lab results and allergy lists, to the iPhone, according to a half-dozen people familiar with the team. And from there, users could choose to share it with third parties, like hospitals and health developers.

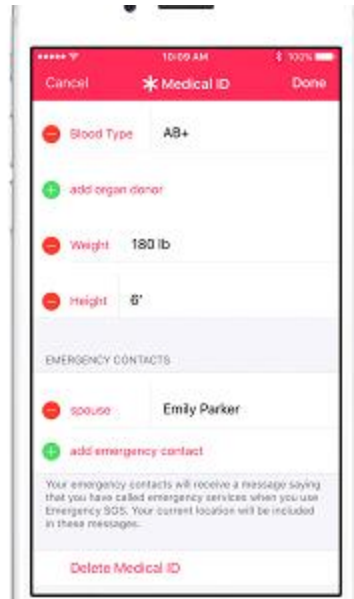
One of the people said Apple is looking at startups in the cloud hosting space about potential acquisitions that might fit into this plan.

Essentially, Apple would be trying to recreate what it did with music -- replacing CDs and scattered MP3s with a centralized management system in iTunes and the iPod -- in the similarly fragmented and complicated landscape for health data.

"If Apple is serious about this, it would be a big f---ing deal," said Farzad Mostashari, former National Coordinator of Health IT for the Department of Health and Human Services and the founder of a start-up called [Aledade](#).

Such a move would represent a deviation in strategy from Apple's previous efforts in health care, the people said, which have focused on fitness and wellness. Apple's HealthKit, for instance, is primarily used to store things like steps and sleep. There's also a feature called "health records," which includes the option to import documents that include summaries of care, but that is a limited snapshot of medical information.

A huge problem



Apple

With this move, Apple is trying to tackle a huge problem that the medical community has been grappling with for years.

Even in the digital age, patients find their info cannot be easily shared between doctors, especially among different hospitals or clinics. This information tends to still live in PDF files attached to emails or delivered by fax machine. Those who do have access through so-called "patient portals" sometimes find that the user experience is poor and the information is limited.

This problem is often referred to as the "interoperability crisis" -- and it is hurting patients, health experts have said.

The lack of data-sharing between health providers leads to unnecessary mistakes and missed diagnoses, Aneesh Chopra told CNBC. "As health care goes digital, the promise has always been to give patients and the doctors they trust full access to their health information," he said.

Apple in recent months has been involved with discussions with health IT industry groups that are looking for ways to make this goal a reality, two of the people said. These include "The Argonaut Project," a private sector initiative that is promoting the adoption of open standards for health information, and "The Carin Alliance," an organization that is looking to give patients a central role in controlling their own medical data.

Bud Tribble, Apple's vice president of software technology, has been personally involved with the latter group, two of the people said. Tribble is a trained physician with a background in

medical research. The Carin Alliance's Ryan Howells declined to comment on Tribble's participation.

The company has also hired some of the [top developers involved with FHIR](#), an increasingly popular protocol for exchanging electronic health records. These people include Sean Moore, an Apple software engineer who previously worked at medical records giant Epic Systems, and Ricky Bloomfield, a physician from Duke University with a background in medical informatics.

Google and Microsoft have tried, but failed

Other technology giants have attempted to solve the problem through their own web-based patient health record services, but have failed. Google shut down its initial product, Google Health, in 2011 due to a lack of traction.

"At any given time, only about 10 to 15 percent of patients care about this stuff," said Micky Tripathi, president and CEO of the Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative and a health IT expert. Managing health information tends to be top of mind only for those who are chronically ill or obsessed with their health.

"If any company can figure out engagement, it's Apple," added Tripathi, who said he didn't have any knowledge of Apple's strategy.

It might have also been too early for an effort like Google Health to succeed. Since then, Mostashari says, policymakers pushed for technical standards among electronic medical records to promote data-sharing.

Apple also has other edges. The majority of doctors use iOS, and Apple has more than 1 billion active devices around the globe, which hospitals and developers are looking for new ways to reach. And it has made data privacy and security a priority in recent years.

Apple's other plans in health include a sensor to [non-invasively track blood glucose](#), CNBC previously reported. It has also made some notable hires from the medical sector of late, [including a rising star of Stanford University's digital health efforts, Sumbul Desai](#), also reported by CNBC.

Apple declined to comment on this report.



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<http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/14/apple-iphone-medical-record-integration-plans.html>