

On Site: Doctors, Patients in the U.S. and U.K. Agree: Mobile Health Apps Are Good for Our Health

Despite the fact that relatively few doctors currently use smartphone technology in their practices, the majority of both physicians and patients in a recent survey say mobile health apps are good for our health.

Research Now Group, a Plano, Texas-based global market research firm, just released results of its survey of 500 doctors, nurses and allied health professionals and 1,000 patients who use health apps in the U.K. It separately surveyed 500 physicians and 1,000 patients in the U.S. who use health apps, defined as digital tools, such as “wearables” that record data about one’s health and are linked to a smartphone device.

Health professionals were asked whether they thought it was beneficial to use the technology in their medical practices and for which types of patients. In turn, patients — the health app users — were asked which types of apps they use and how they feel about using smartphone technology in relation to their health.

Key findings among those surveyed in the U.K. include:

- 48% of healthcare professionals say they will introduce mobile apps into their practices in the next five years.
- 81% of healthcare professionals believe health apps will increase their knowledge of patients’ conditions.
- 93% of patients who use mobile health apps think they will help improve their quality of life, while only 32% of health professionals believe the apps will improve their patients’ lives.
- 65% of healthcare professionals believe health apps will encourage patients to take more responsibility for their health.

“Right now, only 10% of healthcare professionals are using mobile health apps, and only 29% of health app users use them to monitor their health conditions,” Simon Beedell, division director of EMEA (European, Middle East and African) healthcare at Research Now, said in a statement. “But there is a tremendous opportunity for these apps to transform medical care. Technology is available to allow patients with heart disease to send information about their heart rate straight to their doctors. Accessories can allow diabetics to monitor their blood glucose levels and send the results straight to their smartphones, and the elderly can send information on their well-being from a simple app on a tablet or smartphone.”

Key findings of those surveyed in the U.S. include:

- 46% of healthcare professionals say they will introduce mobile apps into their practices in the next five years.
- 86% of healthcare professionals believe health apps will increase their knowledge of patients’ conditions.
- 96% of patients using mobile health apps think they will help improve their quality of life, while only 37% of health professionals believe they will improve their patients’ lives.
- 72% of healthcare professionals believe health apps will encourage patients to take more responsibility for their health.

"The numbers of U.S. physicians and mobile health users are comparable to the U.K. numbers," said Vincent DeRobertis, senior vice president of global healthcare research at Research Now. "About 19% of healthcare professionals use smartphone technology as part of their healthcare, and that number will rise in the coming years. We also found 32% of mobile health users share information with their doctors here, while in the U.K. it's half of that — only 16% share information collected by the mobile apps with their doctors."

The survey found U.S. healthcare professionals generally were more positive in their outlook for helping patients with chronic diseases than their counterparts in the U.K. Among those comparative findings:

- 50% of U.S. healthcare professionals believe health apps will increase the efficiency of patient treatment versus 45% of health professionals in the U.K.
- Only one-third of U.S. and U.K. health professionals surveyed said health apps will improve their relationships with their patients.
- Many people use mobile health apps to help them lose weight and to track their exercise: 60% in the U.S. and 55% in the U.K. use them to monitor activity/workouts, and 42% in the U.S. and 34% in the U.K. use them for weight loss monitoring.
- Nearly half of healthcare professionals in both the U.K. and U.S. said that, through the use of technology, they have the potential to help patients recently discharged from a hospital.

Mobile health technology is here to stay, as only about 20% of health professionals on both sides of the Atlantic said it will never be part of their work in healthcare.

"Health apps have the potential to empower healthcare professionals and patients alike to identify whether individuals are at risk," John Deanfield, British Heart Foundation funded professor, said in a statement. "It's never too early to do something about your lifetime risk, and with this knowledge you can take action to protect against potentially fatal conditions like cardiovascular disease."

— Ronald Rosenberg

This news story was featured in CenterWatch Weekly, one of several newsletters published by CenterWatch, the global source for clinical trials information, timely news, in-depth analysis, study grant and career opportunities, and the largest listing of industry-funded clinical trials on the Internet. For more information, visit <http://www.centerwatch.com>.