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Understanding Patient Activation Levels Can Improve Adoption of Mobile Health Technologies

Harris Poll Shows Doctors More Enthusiastic than Consumers about Emerging Industry

SAN DIEGO, Calif., October 8, 2009 – Mobile healthcare companies can increase adoption of the new technology by understanding their customers' "activation levels" in light of a newly released Harris Poll showing strong physician interest, but only lukewarm consumer interest in the emerging industry.

Conducted in partnership with CTIA (Cellular Telephone Industry of America), the poll gauged the attitudes of consumers and physicians toward mobile healthcare services such as smart phones, wearable bio-sensors and chronic disease monitoring devices. The findings, which also provide insight into respondents' motivation and health behaviors, are being presented at 12:45 p.m. PDT today at the CTIA Mobile IT and Entertainment Show at the San Diego Convention Center.

The survey included questions from the Patient Activation Measure™ (PAM™), a tool used to assess individuals' knowledge, skills and confidence in playing a role in their own health and healthcare, as well as a sister measure that assesses physician support of patient activation. The PAM segments consumers into one of four progressively higher "activation levels" based on their answers – shedding light on how likely they will engage with mobile devices and how to develop more effective communications and support programs.

"The mobile health industry stands to gain a deeper understanding of its users by identifying their level of activation and self-management competencies essential to successful adoption," said Chris Delaney, Chief Executive Officer of Insignia Health, which markets and licenses the PAM. "These results provide insight into how device manufacturers and physicians can help individuals overcome barriers to using these new mobile technologies as important tools to support self-management and promote well-being."

More than 3,473 consumers and doctors responded to the survey, which was administered to a random sample of the U.S. population and a targeted physician sample from the Harris Poll Online. Results showed nearly 60% of physicians expressed an interest in mobile health compared with nearly 40% of the general population. Physicians also believed strongly that mobile health would improve the relationships patients have with their doctors while the general public remained unconvinced. Both groups did agree that mobile health would make medical care easier to obtain and may reduce the number of office visits.

Mobile healthcare was defined as mobile solutions that would allow patients to communicate directly with their physician or allow their physician to monitor, diagnose conditions and administer medications remotely.

The Patient Activation Measure questions were included as a way to assess respondents' self-management abilities along a continuum of increasing activation. At the low end of the spectrum (levels 1 and 2), individuals tend to be passive with regard to managing their health, and may fail to see the connection between their own behaviors and health outcomes. At the high end (levels 3 and 4), individuals understand that relationship and have become good self-managers across a constellation of behaviors.

The Harris Poll showed that in general, belief in the benefits of mobile health strengthens with increasing activation as does the speed at which individuals will accept the technology into their lives.

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Other results show:

- The low activated consumers have the most to gain from mobile technologies given their poor self-management and high utilization of healthcare, but without tailored communication, are also the least receptive.
- The low activated (levels 1 and 2) are much less aware and familiar with mobile health and less interested in its applications.
- The highest activated have a 30% greater interest in mobile technology than the lowest activated and are the most likely to be early adopters.

Physicians also were asked about their support for patient activation. The results showed that physicians higher in activation are more likely to believe that mobile health can reduce healthcare costs, provide more freedom and choice to their patients, and improve their overall health and quality of life.

“The explosion of innovation within the mobile health industry comes at a time when Americans are increasingly focused on how healthcare is provided in this country,” said Joe Porus, of Harris Interactive. “The study illustrates that the activation levels of consumers and physicians help explain expectations of mobile health technologies. Marketers and health professionals can use this information to build wide support amongst consumers and physicians.”

More than 85 studies have documented the importance of patient activation, the PAM’s ability to measure this empirically defined construct, and to predict hundreds of health-related characteristics in wide demographic variability. These characteristics include preventive behaviors such as exercise, nutrition, disease-specific self-management behaviors such as medication compliance and health monitoring, and care behaviors such as successful interaction with a healthcare provider.

Patient activation level segmentation varies between employed, Medicare and Medicaid populations. The lowest activated, though, are consistent in their struggle to manage their health and to navigate the healthcare system. For example, recently published research as part of AARP’s *Beyond 50.09: Chronic Care: A Call to Action for Health Reform*, shows the low activated are less likely to follow their provider’s advice, more likely to be readmitted within 30 days after hospital discharge and more likely to experience poor care coordination.

About Insignia Health

[Insignia Health](http://www.insigniahealth.com) supports organizations and their efforts to help individuals develop the behaviors that are crucial to becoming more active and successful managers of their health and healthcare. These efforts are anchored by the Patient Activation Measure™ assessment. Insignia’s tailored products for both coaches and consumers leverage a wealth of empirical insight to help individuals master new positive behaviors that are realistic given a level of activation. Research, as well as real-world client applications, has demonstrated the benefit of tailored support and the improved patient health and economic gains that come with increasing activation. More information can be found at www.insigniahealth.com.

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