
Google Unveils Wristband for Health Monitoring



Google's latest gadget, a sensor-packed wristband, is designed to help medical professionals track vital signs of patients during clinical trials and drug tests. Developed by Google X, the search giant's life sciences research division, the new wristband can measure pulse, heart rhythm and skin temperature, and also other things such as light exposure and noise levels.

The health-tracking wristband, however, will not be marketed as a consumer device. "Our intended use is for this to become a medical device that's prescribed to patients or used for clinical trials," according to Andy Conrad, head of Google's life sciences team. The idea is for doctors to get a complete picture of patients' activity as it relates to their health, even if they rarely come in for an examination.

"Our hope is that this technology could unlock a new class of continuous, medical-grade information that makes it easier to understand these patterns and manage serious health conditions," Conrad said.

Doctors, researchers and drugmakers have long craved a way to continuously monitor patients' vital signs outside of a lab. However, creating a device that is easy for patients to use, while also capturing rich, accurate data has been a challenge, said Kara Dennis, managing director of mobile health at Medidata, a New York-based firm that specialises in data analytics.

"Historically, doctors do everything — patients just need to turn up at the trial site," explained Dennis. "Now, we're asking patients to take on meaningful responsibility in gathering information." Even asking little things of patients, like regularly charging a device, hurts data compliance, she said. Using the new Google wearable could change that.

Conrad said he hopes that in the future, tools like Google's wristband would be used by healthy people to catch early signs of disease. "I envision a day, in 20 or 30 years, where physicians give it to all patients," said Conrad. "Prevention means all the time."

Google X division has already created an experimental contact lens that can read blood sugar levels in diabetics. Like the contact lens, the wristband gathers information continuously.

Google is working with academic researchers and drugmakers to test the wristband's accuracy and seek regulatory clearance to use it in the U.S. and Europe. Trials to test the band will start over the summer, said Google spokeswoman Jacquelyn Miller.

Google may also look for a manufacturing partner, Conrad added. For example, Swiss drugmaker Novartis AG's Alcon unit has licensed and will commercialise the contact lens.

Source: [Bloomberg](#)

Image credit: Google

Published on : Sun, 28 Jun 2015