
Apple Watch to 'Monitor' Breast Cancer Patients



MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper and Polaris Health Directions have teamed up for a project to help those with breast cancer deal with behavioural health issues. The project will rely on the Apple Watch to track behavioural data in real time that could help refine patients' treatment regimens.

The plan is to equip some 30 breast cancer patients with the new smartwatches, which will include a specially designed app that links to Polaris' Polestar behavioural health outcomes management (BHOM) platform, enabling both patients and providers to capture behavioural data.

"Via our secure Polestar platform, behavioural data captured through the Apple Watch will combine with medical data from the patients' electronic health records within the Cooper health system and population health data," explains Tina Harralson, PhD, science director, Polaris Labs. These data will include treatment side effects, sleep information, physical activity levels, patient mood, and other inputs. "Advanced analytics applied to this mix will result in meaningful and actionable insights for patients and their care teams as treatment progresses," Dr. Harralson adds.

Cori McMahon, PsyD, director of behavioural medicine at MD Anderson Cooper, shares she may see a breast cancer patient once a week in her office, or while they are in the middle of their chemotherapy treatment every two weeks. They are stressed and not remembering all that happened during the past week or two, she says, making it difficult for her to treat their behavioural health issues.

Giving them a watch that can track certain health and wellness data and which gives them an instant link to guidance, their providers and other patients in the programme "is incredibly exciting," she says.

"Patient engagement is a critical factor in successful treatment plans," notes Generosa Grana, MD, FACP, director of the MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper and head of the division of haematology/medical oncology at Cooper University Hospital. "We expect using the Apple Watch will help increase engagement and collect data that ultimately allows us to further refine treatment plans."

Polaris Health will underwrite the Apple Watch Sport 38mm models with pink straps for each of the 30 patients in the pilot and will develop the app, to be made available on Apple's HealthKit platform. The project will be reviewed and approved by the Cooper Institutional Review Board, and MD Anderson Cooper will select the patients and oversee their treatment in the pilot.

Source and image credit: Cooper University Healthcare

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