

Healthcare IT News

iPhone 'ups the game' on health info

By [Eric Wicklund, Managing Editor](#) | 08/01/08 | PHONES 0808

The recent – and much-hyped – launch of [Apple's](#) new [3G iPhone](#) has spurred healthcare IT vendors to launch cell phone-based applications of their own.

[Epocrates](#) launched last month its clinical reference application for the [iPhone](#) and [iPod Touch](#), available on the Apple App Store. The San Mateo, Calif.

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-based provider of clinical information and decision-making tools, which launched a Blackberry product last November that now boasts more than 200,000 customers, had been waiting for [Apple](#) to develop its new [iPhone](#) platform before releasing the new software.

“The [iPhone](#) platform is just so much more rich,” said [Michelle Snyder](#), vice president of marketing and strategic planning for [Epocrates](#), who cites multimedia resources that can't be used on a Blackberry or PDA. “Our value really comes from having updated information at the point of care ... and continuing to be the tool that the physician always has with him or her.”

[AirStrip Technologies](#), based in San Antonio, Texas, has launched the AirStrip OB. Already available for use on PDAs and Smartphones, it will allow obstetricians to access real-time and historical waveform data for both the mother and the baby from the hospital's labor and delivery unit over a cell phone.

Meanwhile, [Opus Healthcare Solutions, Inc.](#) of Austin, Texas has launched the latest version of OpusLaboratorySuite, which includes remote reporting, allowing clinicians to view results on a smart phone or PDA via a cell phone network of hospital Wi-Fi connection. And [CareTools, Inc.](#) of Westlake Village, Calif. is making its digital medical record system for [iPhone](#) and [iPod](#) available at the Apple App Store.

The cell phone movement gained ground at the Towards the Electronic Patient Record (TEPR) conference last May in Fort Lauderdale, where more than 2,000 attendees were invited to download mock health data on their cell phones as part of a nine-month-long project to demonstrate portability.

“The cell phone is becoming a digital health companion,” said [J.Peter Waegemann](#), CEO of the Boston-based [Medical Records Institute](#), which sponsors TEPR. “This will be a whole industry that will be developing in the coming year.”

TEPR featured a demonstration of [AllOne Health Group, Inc.](#)'s AllOne Mobile secure phone-based application. The [Wilkes-Barre, Pa.](#)-based developer of services for healthcare purchasers and payers has since deployed AllOne Mobile on a platform developed by [Canada's Diversinet](#) to 350,000 members of [Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania](#).

Other insurance plans are interested in the standards-based approach, which could jump-start the use of personal health records by a broad segment of the population.

[Diversinet](#) formally launched its MobiSecure Wallet and Vault products in June. Company officials said the products work together to create a secure encrypted platform that gives end-users secure access to their data and documents.

The Wallet turns a mobile phone into a kind of remote control device that consumers can use to display, fax or e-mail data stored in the MobiSecure Vault server or from other data sources, said [Jay Couse](#), senior vice president of [Diversinet](#). The phone serves as a token-like device, and the consumer has a password, thus providing two-factor

authentication.

The current version of AllOne Mobile requires users to input their health information, but [Stuart Segal](#), AllOne's vice president, said the company expects to offer a version that will pre-populate a user's record with a payer's claims data or pharmaceutical prescription information.

"From a personal health record perspective, it's designed to be agnostic and certain elements are pretty standard," he said. "As far as pulling claims information, it isn't that far of a reach to get (a payer) system to download to our platform and then push that out over the phone."

Healthcare IT vendors say cell phone applications will likely dominate the market for some time.

"I think we're at the very early stages of where this is going," said [Greg Juhn](#), vice president of product strategy for [A.D.A.M., Inc.](#), an Atlanta-based provider of health information and benefits technology solutions. "There are a lot of times when you need health information and you're not anywhere near your computer."

"[A.D.A.M.](#) has always been interested in what we can do with cell phones," [Juhn](#) said. "The [iPhone](#) kind of upped the game for everyone."

"Of course, there'll be lots of crap developed, too," he added.

Editor Fred Bazzoli contributed to this story.