

AS IT IS Saturday Edition

Hello and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English! I'm Faith Lapidus in Washington.

Today we talk about two new smartphone applications or apps, as we call them. They are helping people stay healthy by sharing information more quickly. Many people use iPhone apps for recreation. The most popular apps connect us to social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. Others let us play games. And others find songs we love or share pictures.

Today we will hear about two apps that are helping people stay healthy. One helps people with Alzheimer's, a disease that affects the memory.

But first let us hear about an app that may just save a life. If not yours, then perhaps the life of a loved one. Here is Technology reporter June Simms.

Heart Attack App

Researchers have developed an experimental iPhone application, or app, that can improve the chances of survival for heart attack victims. The iPhone app is specially designed to identify patients suffering from a heart attack known as STEMI ((STEM-ee)), or ST-elevation myocardial infarction.

In STEMI, blood flow to the heart is stopped because of a blockage in a coronary artery. Unlike other kinds of heart attacks, STEMIs show up very clearly on an electrocardiogram or ECG. Doctors use such tests to measure electrical activity in the heart.

The experimental iPhone app should be a great help to health care technicians reacting to a possible medical emergency. They can perform an ECG and then take a picture of the test results with the camera on the telephone. They can then send that information ahead to hospital emergency room doctors.

The iPhone app is the work of David Burt and his students at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He says the app can help save lives by preparing doctors for the arrival of the STEMI patient.

“So a decision made as early as possible in the STEMI treatment process allows the system to ramp up or mobilize so that when the patient shows up, they are pushed into the “cath” ((catheterization)) lab, everything happens and their ((coronary)) artery gets opened.”

David Burt and his team tested the app 1,500 times over three American cellular phone networks in a populated area.

“If your iPhone at the time that you hit 'send' shows two or more bars, the app is successful in sending an image 94-plus percent of the time in less than 10 seconds.”

The developers are now testing the iPhone app in rural areas, where cell phone reception is more problematic than in cities.

You are listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

I'm Faith Lapidus in Washington.

Alzheimer's disease destroys the memory. When a person develops Alzheimer's, their family and friends are directly affected. It especially affects those people responsible for caring for them. People with Alzheimer's have difficulty remembering doctor's appointments and when to take medicine. A new app is designed to make caring for Alzheimer's patients easier. June Simms has more.

Phone App Developed to Assist Alzheimer's Caregivers

Alzheimer's disease is mostly a condition of old age. Since life expectancy is getting longer around the world, the number of people affected by the brain disease is expected to triple in some countries by the middle of the century. People with Alzheimer's often have other medical needs that require the services of numerous health care professionals. Caregivers often have a hard time keeping up with all the medical information.

More and more, family members are being called on to help care for loved ones with Alzheimer's. It is a responsibility for which most people are unprepared. This is why the Hebrew Home, a private health care group in Riverdale, New York, developed an iPhone and iPad application called "Balance."

The app offers caregivers advice on recognizing symptoms and on feeding, bathing and providing a healthy environment for the patient. It can be bought on the Internet for four dollars. David Pomeranz is Hebrew Home's program development director, and he created "Balance."

"It is not easy and we hope this will make it a little easier for people."

The Hebrew Home is a not-for-profit organization that provides care to 75,000 patients throughout New York City.

"We are dealing with their family members because, as a philosophy, we feel that we need to care for the caregiver equally in our (response to the) care needs (of) the clients themselves, since if the caregiver does not have the proper supports, they simply cannot be a caregiver."

Mister Pomeranz says the "Balance" software is designed to let users organize medical and other information so they can easily keep track of the person's health. It helps caregivers manage doctor's appointments and share information with doctors about the patient's daily emotional changes.



Interest in the app is not limited to the United States.

“It has been interesting to see that we have had apps purchased (in countries) from Egypt to the Netherlands to Greece. It is like the United Nations every day, to see where people are buying this.”

David Pomeranz says software developers are working on a version of “Balance” for mobile devices using the Android operating system.

Thanks, June. And that is our program for this Saturday. I’m Faith Lapidus. For more programs to help you learn English, visit our website, learningenglish.voanews.com. You can also find us on your favorite social media sites – Facebook, Twitter, iTunes and LinkedIn.

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