

iPad Use at UCLA Helps Patients Manage Chronic Intestinal Ailments

By **Brian T. Horowitz** | Posted 2012-09-21

Patients, doctors and specialized nurses at the University of California Los Angeles Health System are using the Apple iPad to track symptoms for chronic intestinal disorders such as colitis and communicate in real time.

UCLA announced Sept. 12 that it had completed a pilot stage and was now enrolling about 250 patients in the program.

The iPad program at UCLA is part of the university's effort to provide value-based care for each patient. UCLA measures a "value quotient" (VQ) to compare the value of services to patients with health care costs.

In addition to intestinal ailments, UCLA plans to expand the program to other chronic diseases such as heart failure, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The health system will also create apps for tablets and smartphones to help manage these chronic diseases.

By managing chronic conditions through monitoring, early intervention and education on the iPad, people can have a better quality of life, according to UCLA.

"The idea is to have UCLA in your back pocket," Dr. Daniel Hommes, a professor of medicine at UCLA, told *eWEEK*.

The application is currently Web-based, but UCLA is working with Apple to design a native app for iOS. This native app will be available by the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013, said Hommes.

The iPad will allow physicians to interact with patients from day to day and intervene early, if necessary, he said.

Patients use a Web-based program on the iPad called Home Care, which has several modules for patient support. It incorporates a tool called My Academy that enables patients to take tests to gauge their knowledge about their condition. The program also teaches the patients about medication that treats their ailments.

Home Care incorporates gaming rewards as patients get a star when they complete various modules, said Hommes.

Patients answer questions in an interactive app on the iPad about their disease activities, quality of life and work productivity. Doctors and nurses then receive the answers in real time.

"For us, the most important thing to achieve here is patient empowerment," said Hommes.

As educated patients take control of their conditions by using the mobile tool, they could use the health care system less, he suggested.

After reviewing patients' answers, doctors may adjust patients' medication, schedule appointments or conduct remote counseling using the iPad's FaceTime application.

"We're moving toward virtual hospitals," said Hommes, who noted that by using telehealth, patients won't have to travel to their locations such as Westwood and Santa Monica in California.

These remote consulting capabilities will be "the next big thing in health care affordability," said Hommes.

Providing virtual care should increase the quality of care delivery and reduce health care costs, said Hommes.

The Home Care application also incorporates My Coach, a tool that provides help or support for anxiety, isolation and depression, which can result from having a chronic condition. Another module, called My Work, assesses work productivity.

In addition, an around-the-clock messaging tool in Home Care allows doctors and nurses to keep track of patient symptoms and refill prescriptions. This messaging tool and quick response time helps to relieve some of the "burden" of a patient's condition, said Hommes.

In the future, UCLA plans for patients to receive a benefit from health plans for using the iPad app.