

TO YOUR HEART!

Technology to Tame the Heart

By Narendra Singh MD

This month I'd like to discuss how we can utilize technology to protect our heart and strengthen our body. Some of the biggest names in the business (Apple®, Google®, and Samsung®) and other enterprises are investing heavily on what is called wearable technology such as Google glasses®, iWatch®, Fitbit® wristbands and AliveCor® monitors.

With these devices individuals are able to gather information such as body temperature, heart rate, steps taken, calories consumed, sleep patterns, respiratory rate, blood sugar and heart rhythm. Combine this with the thousands of health apps available on both the iPhone and Android platforms and the possibilities to monitor your body are nearly limitless.

With all new advances come new challenges. These devices are expensive and often can't reach those that need it most. The amount of information collected is huge and can almost be overwhelming. Knowing what to do with the information becomes the next hurdle.

This is a rapidly evolving field but I will provide some general thoughts on how best to take advantage of these technologies.

First identify what information you are seeking and determine which of the many apps or devices can offer it to you in the most affordable and user friendly manner. Second, determine what you plan on doing with the information. Tracking steps taken is of little value if you

don't plan to increase those steps to a healthier target. Third, work with your health care professional to interpret your data in a meaningful way that allows you to safely achieve your personal health care goals.

Understanding the limitations of technology are also important. Many of these devices have not been well tested or ever validated. This can lead to false readings creating unnecessary concerns or a false sense of security. Whenever possible try and calibrate your device with standard medical equipment.

Limit who gets your information. We are in an era of big data and the apps you use to store information can also in turn be used to market merchandise and services back to you. The vendors collectively analyze and leverage population behaviors but with recent security breaches your personal behavior can also be exposed. Personally collected data if released could also affect your future health insurance premiums, disability and life insurance coverage and possibly employability.

Overall I believe these new devices have the potential to completely transform healthcare! In conjunction with endless access to internet

information, you are empowered more than ever before to take control of your own health. So go ahead and wear your favorite technology to set new goals for optimal activity, restful sleep, calories consumed and weight lost!■



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