

Medical Alerts in 140 Characters or Less

By Morgen Peck

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"@trialx (<http://twitter.com/trialx>) CT looking for diabetes trials in new york for 55 yr old male" (<http://twitter.com/TrialX/status/1616686722>)

This message was posted today on the TrialX Twitter feed. TrialX, which started as an online matchup between clinical trial organizers and participants, has expedited this courtship even further by opening up its forum to Twitter, and they're making a nice profit while doing it (the company was awarded this year at New York City Entrepreneur Week's business plan competition (<http://www.nycentweek.com/>)). Clinical trial investigators pay \$99 per month to post experiments they're running. Patients, on the other hand, can search the feed or post their own medical details and wait for a response from the program.

In an article published yesterday in the journal Telemedicine and e-health (available [here](http://www.liebertpub.com/products/product.aspx?pid=54) (<http://www.liebertpub.com/products/product.aspx?pid=54>)), Mark Terry catalogues the ways that TrialX and others in the medical field are using Twitter.

Clinical trials is only one of the areas that is getting a boost from Twitter, according to Terry. Many doctors have begun using it in their private practices and are offering advice to Twitter novices. There are a few medical twitter pioneers out there worth note. Phil Baumann (<http://philbaumann.com/2009/01/16/140-health-care-uses-for-twitter/>) and Michael Lara (http://mlaramd.typepad.com/michael_lara_md/2009/03/how-physicians-should-use-twitter.html) have both blogged about how the community should be using twitter to do things like update physicians on conference highlights and keep up to date with fluctuations in the blood glucose levels of diabetic patients.

Of course, the most beneficial aspect of Twitter is that it communicates in real-time. This will lend itself very well to enhancing disaster alerts. The CDC has jumped on the bandwagon with three different feeds, one dedicated to emergency notifications, one specifically for information about the flu, and one that more generally redirects traffic to the CDC site.