

**BUSINESS DAY** | NOVELTIES

# Keeping Your Own Health Chart, Online

By ANNE EISENBERG OCT. 11, 2008

BUSY people can easily forget to take their medications, or to write down symptoms or reactions during a course of treatment — information that could later be meaningful to a doctor.

New tools are being developed that may help harried patients, including those with chronic health conditions, monitor their medications, home tests and other details. The information can then be posted to a Web page that the patient can choose to share with a doctor, pharmacist, friend or caregiver.

Zume Life, of San Jose, Calif., for example, is testing a small hand-held device, the Zuri, that prompts users to take their pills on schedule and to keep track of health-related matters like diet and exercise.

“We’re going after users who are mobile, social, active people” who need to follow a health routine in the midst of busy lives, said Rajiv Mehta, the chief executive of Zume Life.

All of the data from this pocket-size electronic minder, which beeps or flashes when it’s time to take a pill, are uploaded to a Web portal. There, users can inspect, for example, graphs or charts of their exercise or other activities of the last few days or week. And, if the users wish, a caregiver can do so, too.

The Zuri will cost about \$200 when it is released in the spring, Mr. Mehta said. Users will also pay about \$40 to \$50 a month for Web services. A software version of the device that will run on an iPhone is also in the works.

Kathleen Weaver, a high school teacher of computer science in the Dallas Independent School District, is testing a Zuri, using it to keep track of symptoms as well as medication related to diabetes, cardiovascular complications and a persistent cough.

“If I had to write all of this down, I don’t think I could,” she said. “I’m busy all day taking care of other people.”

People who are monitoring their health at home may also take advantage of new online data-storage services being developed by Google, Microsoft and other companies. HealthVault ([www.healthvault.com](http://www.healthvault.com)) by Microsoft lets users upload data directly to their account from about 50 devices, including many blood pressure and heart rate monitors, blood glucose meters and weight scales, said Sean Nolan, a computer scientist and chief architect of the Microsoft Health Solutions Group in Redmond, Wash.

Owners of the account can then share the data with, say, a nurse or case manager who is tracking how they are responding to a new medication. They can also share information with compatible applications — for example, a free blood pressure manager program from the American Heart Association ([www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)).

The number of applications that can exchange information with HealthVault is growing, Mr. Nolan said. NoMoreClipboard ([www.nomoreclipboard.com](http://www.nomoreclipboard.com)), for instance, can draw data from HealthVault to fill in information in medical forms typically required for an initial visit to a doctor. (The basic service is free.)

TrialX ([www.Trialx.org](http://www.Trialx.org)) matches patients to relevant clinical trials based on their health information (no charge for patients).

Users of HealthVault can even arrange to have faxes sent directly to their accounts through a number arranged with MaxEmail ([www.maxemail.com](http://www.maxemail.com)). All faxes sent to the number, like those for immunization records and lab results, are automatically uploaded to the account (\$8.95 a year).

Until recently, there was no easy way for most people to make their health information available to others on the Web, said David Lansky, president and chief executive of the Pacific Business Group on Health, in San Francisco, a coalition of health care buyers.

But people will use the new sites being developed by Google, Microsoft and others as they now use online tools to manage their finances, travel and shopping, Mr. Lansky said.

“This is part of a shift toward a medical system that is more centered on and directed by patients themselves,” he said.

First, however, patients will have to become comfortable placing medical data like readings from home tests online.

Mr. Nolan of Microsoft said that with HealthVault, “you, the account holder, control your health information” and can decide whether and what to share.

If people’s concerns about confidentiality and security are addressed successfully, online repositories could have advantages, said Dr. Robert Steinbrook, a national correspondent for The New England Journal of Medicine.

For example, Dr. Steinbrook said, “a nurse could review information about weight on a daily basis sent directly from a scale to a repository, and not necessarily have to send out someone to weigh a patient.”

But such programs are still under development, he said, and “all of this remains to be seen.”

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