

Coffee Break: Aug. 24

Multitaskers might get less done

Aug 24, 2009

Doctors: A Tweet a day keeps the patients informed



By Michelle Kessler, USA TODAY

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Modern medicine is taking to **Twitter**. In a report in *Telemedicine and e-Health*, medical writer Mark Terry notes that doctors, hospitals and health agencies have started to deliver medicine via Tweet.

"It's easy to dismiss Twitter because so much of the media attention focused on it looks at how movie stars and celebrities like Ashton Kutcher or Oprah are using it," Terry writes. But the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hospitals such as the University of Maryland Medical System, and individual doctors have all taken to contacting patients through Twitter.

The journal report notes ten medical uses for Twitter recommended by clinical nurse Phil Baumann:

1. Disaster alerting and response
2. Diabetes management (blood glucose tracking)
3. Drug safety alerts from the Food and Drug Administration
4. Biomedical device data capture and reporting
5. Shift-bidding for nurses and other healthcare professionals
6. Diagnostic brainstorming
7. Rare diseases tracking and resource connection
8. Providing smoking cessation assistance
9. Broadcasting infant care tips to new parents
10. Post-discharge patient consultations and follow-up care

Since March, a service called "TrialX" connects patients with clinical trials, using Twitter. "The company integrated with two online personal health record providers: Google Health and Microsoft's HealthVault," notes the report.

"It's a bit like having a group of people you can instantly send a blast fax or blast e-mail or a blast communication to because it's real-time and because it was designed for mobility. Instead

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of being like texting my daughter, I might now text 30 people or 50 or 100 people, whatever the number is who are following you," the report quotes physician Joseph Kvedar of Partners Healthcare System in Boston as saying.

By Dan Vergano

Photo: TrialX

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