

Ford's SYNC Platform Offers Health Care Features

Ford researchers have taken a more active role in developing a series of health and wellness in-car connectivity solutions designed to empower people with self-help information while they drive. Leveraging Ford SYNC® and its ability to connect devices via Bluetooth, access cloud-based internet services and control smartphone apps, Ford is developing voice-controlled in-car connections to an array of health aids from glucose monitoring devices, diabetes management services, asthma management tools and web-based allergen alert solutions.

According to a recent survey conducted by CTIA-The Wireless Association and Harris Interactive, some 78 percent of U.S. consumers expressed interest in mobile health solutions. A recent study by digital messaging powerhouse MobileStorm further confirmed this phenomenon, indicating that medical and healthcare apps was the third fastest-growing category of smartphone applications in early 2010. The major app stores, such as the Apple App Store, are now housing upward of 17,000 available health apps for download, with nearly 60 percent of those aimed at consumers rather than healthcare professionals, reports mobile research specialist Research2Guidance.

The ongoing Ford health and wellness research projects include:

- **Glucose monitoring:** Working with Medtronic, Ford researchers have developed a prototype system that allows Ford SYNC to connect via Bluetooth to a Medtronic continuous glucose monitoring device and share glucose levels and trends through audio and a center stack display and provide secondary alerts if levels are too low.
- **Allergy alerts:** Ford is working with SDI Health and www.pollen.com [1] to SYNC-enable its smartphone Allergy Alert app through AppLink, giving users voice-controlled access to the app that provides location-based day-by-day index levels for pollen; asthma, cold and cough and ultraviolet sensitivity; as well as four-day forecasts.
- **WellDoc:** Ford and WellDoc, a leader in the emerging field of mHealth integrated services, have joined forces to integrate in-car accessibility to WellDoc's comprehensive cloud-based personalized solutions for those with asthma and diabetes through SYNC Services. Using voice commands, SYNC users could access and update their WellDoc profile to receive real-time patient coaching, behavioral education and medication adherence support based on their historic and current disease information.

Although still in the prototype and research phase, many of the health and wellness features and services being explored at Ford have fairly short-term implementation

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requirements, such as the Allergy Alert app. Ford is also examining other more long-term health and wellness technologies and ideas related to, for example, heart rate, relaxation and reducing stress. Ford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have long been studying the correlation between stressors and driving performance, wrapping up a nine-month advanced research project last fall that showed drivers are less stressed when using selected vehicle technologies such as Ford active park assist and cross-traffic alert.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.pollen.com/>