Survey Of Physicians Suggests Tablets More Useful Than Smartphones

Two reports from AmericanEHR Partners [1] based on a survey of nearly 1,400 physicians suggests that tablets are of greater use for clinical purposes than smartphones.

"Mobile Usage in the Medical Space 2013" and "Tablet Usage by Physicians 2013" reveal that the most common activity of physicians who use an electronic health record (EHR) and use a smartphone or tablet is "sending and receiving emails." The second most frequent activity among tablet users is accessing EHRs (51 percent daily). Just 7 percent of physicians use their smartphone to access EHRs. Among physicians who have an EHR, 75 percent use a smartphone and 33 percent use a tablet, but time spent on tablets is 66 percent higher than time spent on smartphones.

"These two reports provide useful insights into how physicians use technology to interact with patients, physician satisfaction with mobile devices and apps, and the differences of technology use within various user demographics," said Thomas Stringham, co-founder of AmericanEHR Partners, which provides comprehensive information to support clinicians in the selection and use of EHRs to improve health care delivery.

The top market share position is held by Apple, with 55 percent of physicians using smartphones and 54 percent using tablets. Clinical app usage in a medical practice was much higher among smartphone users (51 percent daily) than tablet users (30 percent daily). The top five smartphone apps used in a medical practice were Epocrates, Medscape, MedCalc, Skyscape, and Doximity. The top five tablet apps used in a medical practice were Epocrates, Medscape, Up To Date, MedCalc, and Skyscape.

Only 28 percent of smartphone users and 18 percent of tablet users were "very satisfied" with the quality of apps for their profession.

"As the adoption of mobile devices increases, so do the expectations of clinical users," Stringham said. "The health IT sector and app developers have an opportunity to improve the quality and usefulness of clinical mobile apps."

Additional highlights from the "Mobile Usage in the Medical Space 2013" report include:

- Mobile phone usage by physicians who use an EHR: 77 percent use a smartphone, 15 percent use a regular mobile phone, and 8 percent use neither.

- About 75 percent of physicians use their smartphone to communicate with other physicians at least once weekly.
- About 70 percent of physicians use their smartphone to research medications at least once weekly.
- Of the physicians surveyed, about 25 percent who use a regular phone intend on purchasing a smartphone within the next six months.

Additional highlights from the "Tablet Usage by Physicians 2013" report include:

- About 33 percent of EHR users and 25 percent of non-EHR users use a tablet device in their medical practice.
- Smaller practices, defined as three doctors or fewer, are likely to conduct a broader range of activities on their tablet, such as banking, communicating with patients, or taking photos for clinical purposes.
- About 33 percent of EHR users are very satisfied with their tablet device, while 44 percent are somewhat satisfied.
- About 33 percent of EHR users use a tablet to research medications daily.

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[1] http://www.americanehr.com