



IBM Partners with Google Health and Continua Health Alliance to Create Smarter PHRs

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[IBM announced with Google and Continua Health Alliance](#) a collaborative effort to incorporate IBM software into the Google Health platform that will enable data to automatically stream from personal medical devices into a consumer's Google Health account or personal health record (PHR). The IBM software, which combines the capabilities of Information Management, Business Intelligence and the WebSphere Premises Server sensor event platform, was developed based on guidelines from Continua Health Alliance. IBM and Google are members of Continua, a global industry alliance of technology, medical device and healthcare companies whose objective is to "make telehealth a reality."

Today's announcement embodies [IBM's Smarter Planet initiative](#) of a world that is:

- Instrumented. Great progress has been made in making devices that were once only used in clinical settings readily accessible to consumers at home and available for purchase in their neighborhood pharmacies. For example, diabetics can measure their glucose levels with a simple-to-use hand-held glucometer and consumers with COPD can measure blood oxygenation with a pulse oximeter.
- Interconnected. Connecting these personal medical devices to consumers' PHRs, either directly or through their Google Health account, enables consumers to aggregate data from disparate sources and share their health information with their physicians, health coaches, and even other family members with the consent of the consumer.
- Intelligent. A shared repository of health information creates an opportunity to turn data into information that can be measured and monitored more closely, and then acted upon through the application of clinical decision support tools. For example, clinical rules can identify abnormal ranges for results, gaps in care and the potential for adverse drug events.

The ability to connect to personal medical devices will enable Google Health to expand its current list of partners to include personal medical device vendors and provide comparable functionality to Microsoft HealthVault. To date, [Google Health's list of partners](#) features primarily retail and online pharmacies plus Cleveland Clinic, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, MinuteClinic from CVS Caremark, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. In contrast, through the HealthVault Connection Center consumers can establish [a connection with a dozen devices](#) from nine different vendors today. Although Microsoft itself is not a member of Continua, all of its medical device partners are either [promoting or contributing members](#), so we anticipate that connectivity between these devices and Google Health will be forthcoming in the next three to six months. Any company that conforms to the open Continua standard will be able to use the IBM software solution to stream data to Google Health. Currently, there are more than 170 Continua members, many of which offer personal medical devices.

Even with the new entrants to the PHR market — technology giants Google Health and Microsoft HealthVault — consumer uptake of PHRs is quite limited, with adoption rates in the 3–6% range, principally due to lack of portability when consumers switch health plans or employers and lack of pre-population of data. Only the most obsessive consumers would take the time to completely rekey their medication or encounter history. And no consumer could keep up with the all the data that could stream from personal medical devices, such as glucometers, peak flow meters, and pulse oximeters. Facilitating connectivity between the PHR and various payer and provider data sources, including personal medical devices, is a step in the right direction to encouraging increased consumer adoption. Other key factors include ease of use, configurable privacy and security controls, ability to adapt to a consumer's medical literacy,

communications between the consumer and provider, as well as management of health insurance and medical bills.

Health Industry Insights believes that the collaborative efforts between Continua, Google and IBM, first showcased at Partners' Connected Health Symposium in October 2008, will serve as an early proof of concept for IBM's "instrumented, interconnected and intelligent" vision. An interoperable, personal medical device-connected PHR will play a supporting, but important, role in remote patient monitoring (RPM) and the medical home. The need for PHRs, RPM and medical home is being driven by the increased prevalence of chronic conditions; 90 million Americans have at least one chronic condition, and 125 million Americans have multiple chronic conditions. While PHRs unto themselves are not the silver bullet for overcoming the myriad challenges facing the U.S. healthcare system today, they are certainly one of many tools that can be used to engage consumers to play a more active role in managing their own health.

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