

Tech Alliance To Address Remote Monitoring Reimbursement Gap (Extended Version of Earlier Article)

By Jessica Bylander

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Continua Health Alliance is developing a database of all U.S. and European remote patient monitoring trials conducted in the past five years, a first step toward tackling the remote monitoring reimbursement shortfall.

The group expects to complete the project in about four months, Continua's Board Treasurer Michael Robkin of Kaiser Permanente said during a Sept. 12 teleconference.

The alliance is partnering with research firm Abt Associates to develop the database of trials such as Medtronic's 2,000-patient CONNECT trial evaluating the cost effectiveness of monitoring ICD patients with Medtronic's *CareLink* remote monitoring system.

The database marks "the first necessary step" by Continua toward proving the quality and cost effectiveness of remote monitoring technologies.

From there the group plans to meet with both public and private payers to identify "the additional barriers that exist to seeking reimbursement for these technologies," said David Whitlinger, director of Healthcare Device Interoperability at Intel and chairman of the tech alliance.

He called it "the first cornerstone" in a plan to address reimbursement issues more broadly. Despite a growing interest in remote monitoring from device makers and physicians hoping to mitigate health care costs and address the squeeze on hospital resources, weak reimbursement remains a barrier to the adoption of these systems.

Abt and Continua will catalog and assess studies and peer-reviewed literature to find ways to increase cost effectiveness, map out quality improvement studies and earn insurance reimbursement for their products and services.

Industry stakeholders are lobbying Congress to require CMS to reimburse doctors for time spent analyzing data transmitted remotely by medical devices for heart failure, cardiac arrhythmia, diabetes, sleep apnea and epilepsy (¹["The Gray Sheet" Aug. 20, 2007, p. 4](#)).

Continua Health Alliance is an international group of technology, health care and fitness companies formed in June 2006 to streamline the various mobile technologies on the market and create a standardized framework for transmitting information to health care providers (²["The Gray Sheet Jun. 12, 2006, p. 5](#)). Founding members include Medtronic, Philips, Kaiser Permanente and Intel. The group grew from 22 companies to more than 130 in its first year.