

Apple Watch Implications for Pharma

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Overview and Goals:

Today's patients are playing a bigger role in educating themselves on their diseases, treatment options and overall healthcare decisions. With the increase in popularity of wearable devices, technology is making it even easier for people to be proactive about their health by providing an easier way to track daily lifestyle habits.

Our goal was to get into the mindset of the consumer who may look to wearables for health-related reasons to better understand their journey with the technology, so we could uncover what future opportunities for our clients would be.

Wearable technology continues to evolve and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon. Consumer adoption of these wearables also continues to grow and eMarketer [predicts](#) usage to significantly rise year over year, with 2 in 5 Americans using a wearable by 2019. With a large focus of wearable technology centering on fitness and health, there is an opportunity for the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry to reach patients. But what will the impact of this wearable trend really mean for pharma, and how should the pharmaceutical industry respond to these new patient needs and interests to go "beyond the pill"?

CMI/Compass put together a team to investigate the potential use the Apple Watch – one of the most popular wearables – has within the pharmaceutical industry by testing six health and wellness categories: nutrition, exercise, hydration, sleep, medication compliance, and mind wellness.

Methodology and Results:

Each team member focused on one of the six tested categories for a two-week interval, wearing the watch as the "Test," while the other members continued their normal routines as the "Control" group with instruction to track behaviors using anything aside from the Watch. The categories were chosen based on that person's habits and goals set to achieve their own personal health.

"By 2019, 2 in 5 Americans will own a wearable device, with that number expected to rise year over year."

eMarketer



The test groups were surveyed before and after each two-week interval with the intent to gauge any behavioral/attitudinal changes during each testing period. Each tester was also tasked to keep a daily log of goals, experiences, results, and opinions of the Apple Watch's functionality. Additionally, the entire team was surveyed prior to and after the entire 12-week trial regarding general wellness and tracking behavior.

Results found that awareness was a common theme across the six test groups, showing that all team members became more aware of how they ate, exercised, and slept. However, no one found the Apple Watch to be a significant contributor to any of their wellness goals to neither eat better, exercise regularly, nor sleep more. A universal benefit all team members mentioned was the standard Activity app. This app proved helpful and effective by including reminders to stand/move throughout the day, medication compliance alerts, and alerts for hydration and sleep timing.

Nutrition Testimony

"During the course of the 2-week nutrition timeframe, my nutrition quality actually went down even though I was trying to be more mindful of what I was eating. I wanted to eat three meals per day with two snacks since I skip many meals, but without having a reminder I did not meet my goals. It was also very tedious and difficult to enter all the nutrition information into the Apps, especially when finding the time to eat was a concern from the beginning."

Hydration Testimony

"My personal hydration goal was to increase the amount of water I drank, from 24 to 36 ounces. With the Daily Water App, I was able to set this goal and be reminded to drink more water throughout the day. While the app was tedious, it helped improve my overall hydration intake."

Fitness Testimony

"I did not see much change in my exercise routine after the two week testing period. Tracking a run still required me to bring my phone so it did not add anything to my experience aside from the ability to switch music. One feature I did like was that the Watch reminded me to stand after I had been sitting at my desk for an extended period of time."

Sleep Testimony

"My sleep goals were to get better quality sleep and have a more standard bedtime throughout the week. While Apps showed the quantity of sleep and data regarding quality like light and REM cycles, it was difficult to link to the causes of quality. The Apple Watch is a great tool to aid in sleep awareness but quality of sleep will not improve simply through utilization of the sleep Apps."

Medication Testimony

“I used the MediSafe App which helped me be more mindful of when to take the medication, pending I was connected with my phone and in range to get the alerts. Once I was far from my phone, I still became noncompliant with medication. Overall, the Watch and medication apps have the potential to be extremely helpful if the functionality was improved.”

Mind and Wellness Testimony

“Stress is a huge part of anyone’s day. I wanted to understand the varying levels of stress that I felt and how I could best cope with it to still get my work done and not at the detriment of my health or mind wellness. I did not see any change in my goals, even while wearing the Apple Watch. I found it difficult to use the watch for this category since I mostly needed to use my phone anyway.”

These testimonies show the variety of reasons a consumer may turn to the Apple Watch for healthcare needs. It also underscores the great potential that still lies within. People are turning to wearables for many aspects of their healthcare and overall lives, and advertising will follow – using the best practice to “be where the people are.”

Moreover, these modifications explain how the second generation of the Apple Watch could provide more value to a consumer than its predecessor:

- Ability to function independent of iPhone
- Improved battery life
- Waterproof
- GPS tracking
- Ensure accurate readings/tracking
- Compatibility with additional apps/systems

Apple Watch as it Relates to Pharma and Healthcare:

Wearable technology has the potential to both influence and transform the healthcare landscape, getting patients even more involved in their health than ever before. As it currently stands, advertising opportunities on the Apple Watch itself are limited. And even though healthcare and pharma companies could create their own apps, typical digital media opportunities do not yet exist. However, our team believes this will change in the coming months and years. Much like we have seen with the iPhone and mobile advertising, as Apple builds upon its first generation release of the Apple Watch, we expect its advertising opportunities to grow along with it.

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These opportunities will likely remain small-scale – such as in-app banner ads or push-messaging – but it will be important for pharma to get involved considering the current and predicted growth of wearables among consumers/patients.

Outside of advertising opportunities, the other huge potential CMI/Compas sees for pharma companies comes in the data these devices can collect. A few of the data points the Apple Watch currently tracks, which our team personally tested, included: calories burned, time exercised, heart rate, hydration intake, nutritional intake, and medical compliance – all of which are key pieces of information for any physician wishing to monitor the health of his/her patients. Additional medical devices are already being developed for use in conjunction with the Apple Watch, such as blood glucose readers and epileptic seizure alerts. If Apple continues to pursue partnerships and development of user-friendly health apps for its Apple Watch, tracking will only become more precise and prevalent. Access to such vast patient data would be invaluable to doctors, allowing them to gain a more accurate depiction of their patients' behaviors and better inform treatment decisions.

If all of this information could then be integrated into a patient portal or EMR system, a more seamless system of patient-physician interaction could be established, along with a more detailed and accurate picture of patient history. Pharma could not only support this initiative in the way of relevant app/technology development, but also utilize this collected data to gain a more holistic picture of patient behavior.

In conclusion, the Apple Watch has the potential to become a huge piece of how patients and doctors track their health and make more informed healthcare decisions. Pharma should view the Apple Watch as an opportunity to partner with technology to influence the future of healthcare. This technology could change the way pharma interacts with patients, not just as a new channel to reach patients, but also as a way to better understand them. A collaboration between the resources of pharma and the expertise of the tech world could further the ability of HCPs to make more informed, data-driven, health decisions – ultimately leading to more positive outcomes for all patients.



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