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Your Personal Health Buddy



**New Devices Allows
Doctors to Monitor Patients
From Afar**

The Health Buddy is an easy way for doctors and chronically ill patients to communicate. (Health Hero Network)



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ABCNEWS.com*

Feb. 26 — Imagine if a doctor could monitor a patient's status 24 hours a day, from anywhere. That's the idea behind new technological

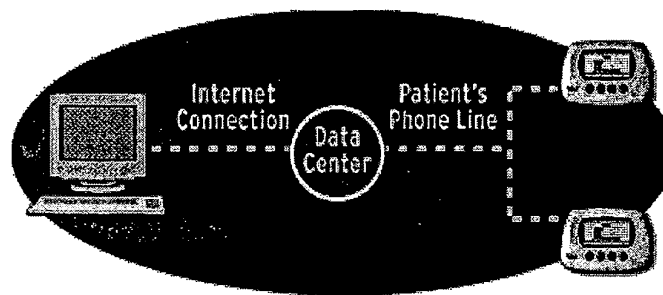
breakthroughs that use smart-card technology and the Internet to change the way doctors and patients interact.

The Health Hero Network, a 10-year-old company based in Mountain View, Calif., has created a new way for patients to report on their own health, and for doctors to give them instructions and recommendations online.

"The people who need the most health care ... often have the least contact and the least ability to contact their health care provider on a regular basis," says Steve Brown, CEO of the Health Hero Network. "They are disconnected from the system most of the time."

Remote Monitoring

Brown hopes to reconnect patients and doctors with a pager-like device called the Health Buddy. The device is intuitive and easy-to-use, and doesn't require the patient to have any special skills. The base of the wireless unit connects with normal telephone lines.



Through the Internet and the Health Hero Network's data center, doctors and patients can relay information to each other quickly and efficiently. (ABCNEWS.com)

On the other end, the physician accesses a special Web site on his or her desktop computer. Health care providers can send messages and questions to patients whenever they want, asking how they feel or if they've remembered to take their medication, and monitor their answers.

The questions and reminders show up on the LCD screen of the Health Buddy, and the patient chooses one of four possible responses to each question. For example, a prompt asking the patient how he or she is feeling may offer responses such as good, fair, poor or very poor.

In addition, the Health Buddy system can be hooked up to other "smart" devices that can measure a patient's blood pressure, glucose, temperature, etc. If the physician feels the need for a follow-up, he or she can call the patient and make further arrangements.

"Oh, this is easy to use," says Joline Lyons, a diabetes patient using the Health Buddy. "All you have to know is how to turn it on, how to use the buttons, and it's wonderful."

Future Care

Doctors believe that through the use of smart devices and the Internet, whole arrays of remote devices will fundamentally change the way long-term patients are treated and monitored in the next century.

"You would have clothing that would monitor your health if you are diseased," says Dr. Rick Satava of the Yale University Medical School. "You would perhaps have rooms in your home that you would go to that would be able to check you on a day-to-day basis."

In the very near future, devices such as these could give chronically ill patients the independence they desire with the monitoring they need — at a fraction of the cost. ■