

WHY CONNECT AN AUTO-INJECTOR TO A SMARTPHONE?

The HealthPrize collaboration with West is designed to help enhance the patient experience surrounding injectable medications, encouraging greater patient engagement and adherence, both critical to clinical outcomes. This collaboration is, at its heart, part of the broader “Internet of things” movement, connecting everyday devices to the Internet.

The Nest® Learning Thermostat™ is one of the most commonly cited examples of this rapidly developing trend. It allows you to check the temperature inside your home remotely via your smartphone, and also adjust it as desired.

The Nest thermostat example makes simple sense. But why would a person with diabetes, for example, want to link their auto-injector to the Internet?

Given that smartphones are now so central to our everyday lives, it could be argued that the better question is: Why not? For a person with a “condition” who is, reluctantly, a “patient,” connecting their therapy to their phone (or any other Internet-connected device) is a way of integrating it into their everyday lives in a friendlier and more seamless way.

Nobody actually wants to inject themselves. It’s no fun. It hurts. Even worse, many drugs could have little to no immediate benefit, but rather long-term benefits—making the psychological hurdle even higher. With our collaborative West-HealthPrize solution, the fact that we can connect an auto-injector to our software allows us to offer a number of immediate benefits to patients on injectable therapy.

For one, we can add the “fun factor” of immediate points, redeemable for gift cards, merchandise, or charitable donations, similar to other loyalty programs that patients are accustomed to taking advantage of in their everyday consumer lives. In addition, the gamification elements of our program—sweepstakes, leaderboards—allow them to feel that they are part of a greater community of other patients also striving to “win.”

Once engaged, patients also then have access to daily and weekly educational offerings, with the benefit of strengthening the intrinsic motivation required to stick with medications long-term. And just as with any other Internet or app-based tool, patients can engage wherever and whenever it’s convenient for them.

And, of course, most similar to the Nest thermostat analogy, patients can collect and tap into their own data. How adherent were they last month? How many points have they earned? These data, aggregated and de-identified, also become valuable to the pharmaceutical companies and other healthcare constituencies that sponsor each program.

And finally, daily emails or text messages from the program serve as helpful medication reminders, particularly relevant as they are delivered to the smartphone that is most likely with a patient at all times.

Will all patients connect their auto-injectors to the Internet? No. Some won't need to and some won't want to. But given the magnitude of the adherence problem (the need) and the proven power of incentives and gamification (the want), many, many patients most likely will.

The Nest® Learning Thermostat™ is a registered trademark of Nest Labs, Inc.



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