

AT&T sets up division to target health care

November 4 2010, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- AT&T Inc., the country's largest telecommunications company, on Thursday said it is setting up a division to target the health care industry, hoping to have a significant seat at the table when industry adopts electronic medical records, doctor's visits by video-conferencing and wireless gadgets like remote glucose monitors.

There are already "intelligent pill-bottle caps" that sense if they've been opened. If they aren't opened every day, they send text messages through AT&T's network to caregivers who can remind patients to take their medicine.

AT&T's new "ForHealth" division, part of its Business Solutions group, will look for more opportunities like that.

"We believe the healthcare industry is at a tipping point for fundamental change that will improve patients' care and lead to better health care outcomes," said John Stankey, head of AT&T Business Solutions.

While all big telecoms have sales teams that target big industry sectors like health care, it's unusual for one to set up a larger group that integrates several product categories. In AT&T's case, it will be selling wireless services, networking services like video-conferencing and "cloud computing" - under which AT&T runs computers and applications for clients who access them through the Internet.

Dallas-based AT&T said it pulled in \$4 billion in revenue from health care industry players like hospitals, insurers, drug companies and doctors

in 2009. The market for health care information-technology is \$34 billion this year, according to figures from analyst firm IDC.

AT&T's interest in [health care](#) isn't just as a revenue opportunity - it provides care for 1.2 million employees and dependents, and is interested in seeing how technology could reduce costs, said Randall Porter, assistant vice president of AT&T Business Solutions.

The company is also making a big push to put wireless technology into devices beyond phones, to expand the wireless market now that nearly everyone already has a phone.

As one example, AT&T researchers are working with hospitals and universities on "smart slippers" that can alert caregivers wireless to falls, or help prevent them by drawing attention to problems with walking.

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