

# Digital health tech on display at electronics show

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The USB Insta-scan Thermometer from Ion Health is displayed at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. The USD 90 device can acquire non-contact temperature readings from 1.2 inches away from the skin and upload data via USB 2.0 to a computer where it can be used with Ion Health Suite software.

Technology companies showed off the latest innovations on the digital health care front at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) alongside the newest smartphones, touchscreen tablet computers and 3D television sets.

For the second year, organizers staged a full-day "Digital Health Summit" featuring sessions such as "The Doctor in Your Hand: Exploring [Mobile Health](#) Options" and "Does Technology Motivate

## People to Stay Healthy?"

Exhibitors said [digital technology](#) can help significantly lower health costs, give people the ability to be more actively involved in their care through self-monitoring and improve doctor-patients communications.

"The intersection of health and technology is really ripe for an explosion," said Jason Goldberg, 33, president and founder of Ideal Life, a Toronto-based company that makes monitoring devices.

"Technologies formally were cost prohibitive," Goldberg said.

"But I can now sit down at the kitchen table for breakfast and check my blood sugar," he said, and transmit the data in real-time to a [health care provider](#) using a device that costs less than \$100.

Elliot Sprecher, senior data analyst for Israeli company IDesia, developer of a heartbeat sensor, said digital technology should lead to "better patient awareness of their own physical health."

"Typically if you're an informed consumer in any market you're going to get better service," Sprecher said.

"For example, an electrocardiogram (ECG) is usually taken maybe once a year," he said. "That's not enough to capture the possibility of any real substantial [heart problem](#)."

"If you were taking readings every day eventually you'd also see the affects of bad lifestyle," Sprecher said. "Conversely you'd see the improvement if you started an exercise program."



Attendees relax in massage chairs at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vega, Nevada. Technology companies showed off the latest innovations on the digital health care front at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) alongside the newest smartphones, touchscreen tablet computers and 3D television sets.

Ideal Life's Goldberg said digital devices can have a big impact on chronic condition management.

"You can do that with simple, easy to use, affordable, familiar devices," he said. "A blood pressure cuff, a glucose meter."

Chuck Parker, executive director of Continua, an industry consortium that works to ensure the interoperability and of medical devices, said digital technology "has the opportunity to really lower the cost of health care overall."

"Individuals can collect data and send it and the health care professional on the other end can interact with it," he said, potentially cutting down on some expensive emergency room visits.

"There's absolutely no question that digital technology is going to impact health in a positive way," said Ananth Balasubramanian, senior director

for product management at iMetrikus, a Sunnyvale, California-based company which securely transmits self-monitoring health data.

"The big thing is how the industry overcomes all of the political factors, the complete entrenchment of the system right now," he said. "That needs to be changed."

Dr. Amar Setty, a Baltimore-based medical technology consultant, agreed that a number of barriers remain before full advantage can be taken of the digital revolution in the medical field.



The Wheeme robot from DreamBots Inc massages the back of an attendee at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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"There's just too many different vendors dealing in too many proprietary systems," Setty said, adding that the vast promise of electronic health records also remains elusive for the moment.

"Privacy and liability are big matters," he said. "People are scared to

enter the space in some ways.

"Physicians are somewhat scared because they don't want to be sued because they let a patient's record get out," he said.

At the same time, Setty said he has seen "a lot of consumer-based mobile applications that are really interesting.

"Especially for people who want to exercise -- apps to help motivate them and track their data," he said.

"I think really at the moment the industry is centered on individuals who are motivated to take charge of their own health care," Setty said. "What I'm personally looking for is something for everyone."

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