

# Mobile medical apps risky

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(Phys.org) —Possible risks associated with medical staff using mobile devices and software applications (apps) for professional purposes have been raised in a leading study at Monash University.

Published in the prestigious *European Journal of ePractice*, Monash University researchers and senior lecturers in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Jennifer Lindley and Dr Juanita Fernando, raised concerns around the use of smartphones, tablets and software apps in the health care sector.

"While mobile devices provide many benefits to medical, nursing and allied health practitioners and their patients, mobile digital technologies in health care (mHealth) also has identifiable disadvantages and risks," Ms Lindley said.

The lack of governance and regulatory guidelines relating to the use of mobile devices in medical workplaces was one of the main concerns highlighted in the study.

Some of the benefits of mHealth include more convenient access to patient records through mobility of devices, improved communication between health professionals as well as improved efficiency and decision making.

However, the potential risks included infrastructure constraints such as bandwidth availability, distracters including email alerts and advertising banners and privacy and [security issues](#).

"On mobile devices, icon badges, notifications, 'pop-up' alerts and constant availability of emails and internet access lead to distraction," Dr Fernando said.

"Privacy and security issues in health care contexts are of particular concern to all stakeholders because of the sensitive nature of the data stored on the many [mobile devices](#).

Ms Lindley said the development of apps was also ad hoc and frequently undertaken without input or critical appraisal by end-users.

"This can result in either variability of features or an app that does not perform the expected function," Ms Lindley said.

Dr Fernando said best practice use of mHealth needed to be

incorporated into the education of [health care professionals](#), and curricula needs to provide the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes for future professional practice.

"In the case of an adverse event, who precisely is responsible - the app developer, the individual clinician user, the [health care](#) provider organisation or the government regulators?" Dr Fernando said.

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Provided by Monash University

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