

# TechBits: Analyzing medical data, breaking smartphones

April 15 2015, by Brandon Bailey

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In this March 9, 2015 file photo, Apple Vice President of Operations, Jeff Williams, discusses ResearchKit during an Apple event in San Francisco. This week of April 13, 2015, Apple launched ResearchKit for scientists to create more specialized apps for medical studies. ResearchKit had been limited to five pilot groups until now. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

Your smartphone could be a valuable tool for medical research—and for treating a variety of ailments.

IBM wants to use the power of its Watson computing system—which famously won TV's "Jeopardy" a few years back—to analyze mountains of data collected from individuals who use health-related smartphone apps, fitness bands and other gadgets. A new IBM business will provide Internet computing services for health-care companies and researchers to collect and analyze that data, along with information from patient treatment records and research trials.

By combining all that data, and then searching for trends and patterns, IBM believes researchers could gain new insights into treatment and prevention. The company promises the information will be "anonymized" to protect individuals' privacy and used only with their consent.

IBM is also working with other companies to use Watson's analytical prowess in new health services. Johnson & Johnson is developing "intelligent coaching" apps for patients recovering from surgery. Medtronic is creating programs to help diabetics monitor glucose and adjust their insulin treatment. Apple will let researchers use IBM's platform to analyze data from health apps on iPhones.

Apple already has software tools called HealthKit to help individuals track fitness and health data on their iPhones. This week, Apple launched ResearchKit for scientists to create more specialized apps for medical studies. ResearchKit had been limited to five pilot groups until now. Some of those apps gather data from iPhone sensors like the microphone, which can measure voice tremors caused by Parkinson's Disease, and the accelerometer, which can measure changes in a walker's gait. Apple says 60,000 iPhone owners have already downloaded those apps and enrolled in medical studies.

Apple also announced that its annual developers conference will be held June 8 to 12 in San Francisco. That's when Apple typically previews the

next versions of its Mac and iOS mobile systems.

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In this April 10, 2015 file photo, the new Samsung Galaxy S6 smartphone is on display at a Best Buy electronics store in San Francisco. Galaxy S6 phones proved durable in the face of drops and other pressures, according to SquareTrade, a provider of extended-protection plans for gadgets. In SquareTrade's tests, which use robots to throw and drop various phones to ensure consistency, the S6 phones had great water resistance, even though it doesn't officially have those capabilities as last year's Galaxy S5 did. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

## **BREAKING PHONES ... ON PURPOSE**

Samsung's new Galaxy S6 phones proved durable in the face of drops

and other pressures, according to SquareTrade, a provider of extended-protection plans for gadgets.

In SquareTrade's tests, which use robots to throw and drop various phones to ensure consistency, the S6 phones had great water resistance, even though they don't officially have those capabilities as last year's Galaxy S5 did. But the S6 phones lost points for having slippery glass backs. They slid farther than last year's plastic Galaxy S5 and the metal-back iPhone 6 when pushed, making them more prone to falling off the edge of a table.

A premium version of the S6, known as Edge, also lost points for bending under pressure, though the regular S6 did well, withstanding 110 pounds of pressure.

Samsung says any phone will break if you try hard enough, but its phones "are capable of taking some hits." The company says the metal frame, for instance, is designed to absorb much of the impact from any drops to protect the glass. Samsung posted video showing phones still working after drops. As for bending, Samsung says SquareTrade's tests apply more pressure than would be typical in a person's back pocket.

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## BATTLING INTERNET RULES

AT&T Inc. and four industry groups representing telecommunications, wireless and cable companies have filed lawsuits to overturn the Federal Communications Commission's new Internet traffic rules.

The FCC's rules are meant to uphold the principle of net neutrality—that Internet content should be treated equally and load at the same speed.

Many Internet providers say they don't want to block or slow content, but they don't want the stricter regulation that comes with the new rules. The FCC enacted them by placing Internet access in the same regulatory bucket as the telephone. Labeling Internet access as a telecommunications service, rather than an information service as it was before, subjects it to broader oversight by the FCC. With the rules, the agency will be able to hear and investigate complaints of unfair practices by Internet service providers from consumers and Web companies such as Netflix.

Federal courts had struck down the FCC's previous attempt at net neutrality rules, which kept Internet access regulated as an information service. The judges said then that the FCC had effectively treated Internet service providers as common carriers like utilities or phone service even though they were exempt from such treatment as an information service.

The lawsuits had been widely expected. Filing lawsuits this week are AT&T, CTIA, a wireless trade group; the cable trade groups National Cable & Telecommunications Association and American Cable Association; and the United States Telecom Association, an industry group that represents companies including AT&T and Verizon.

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