

Driscoll utilizes diabetes technology

Children's hospital first in nation to use a wireless diabetes device

By Deborah Perry
Contributing Writer

Living with diabetes just got easier for young patients and their families thanks to an automated diabetes management system. The system incorporates a wireless blood sugar monitoring device.

It's no secret that technology is getting better, faster and smaller, while making its way into every aspect of daily life. With the increase prevalence of diabetes and high cost of caring for people with the disease, putting new advances to work in the real world is desperately needed.

With the future already here, Driscoll Children's Hospital is helping young patients with diabetes and their parents track blood sugars more efficiently through new real-time, cutting-edge technology. Recently, the hospital's diabetes clinic has begun to issue the first of over 200 wireless devices to children all across Texas to be used for automated blood sugar monitoring.

"It's all quite advanced and very, very simple - even a child can do it," said Dr. Stephen Ponder, the medical director of the Children's Diabetes Center of South Texas at Driscoll.

The new device, called a GlucoMON®, was developed by the Dallas-based company, Diabetech. It automates certain aspects of diabetes management including data collection from patients who use blood glucose meters every day. A centralized system then receives and reviews the patient's data and delivers various forms of feedback to help keep the diabetes in check.

Alerts and reports are sent by e-mail. No cell phone, pagers, special software or internet are actually required. In addition, real-time alerts can also be sent to a parent via text messaging in seconds from completion of the test is

done while the child is at school. Children do not have buttons to push or navigate menus while parents do not have to synchronize PDA or personal computers or return phone calls.

"Patients experience better outcomes with less work and because of the ease of remote monitoring, and my staff and I are able to provide timelier coaching which translates directly into fewer trips to the hospital," said Ponder of the simplified patient self-care task.

Feedback on remote patients is also being streamlined by Driscoll's diabetes staff. No more lengthy phone calls, illegible faxes or snail mail to collect information from patients not living in the local area. This new technology has extended Driscoll's diabetes program to young diabetics across the state from Mount Pleasant in northeast Texas to Laredo and beyond.

Ponder adds that the new devices are already improving more lives and saving money.

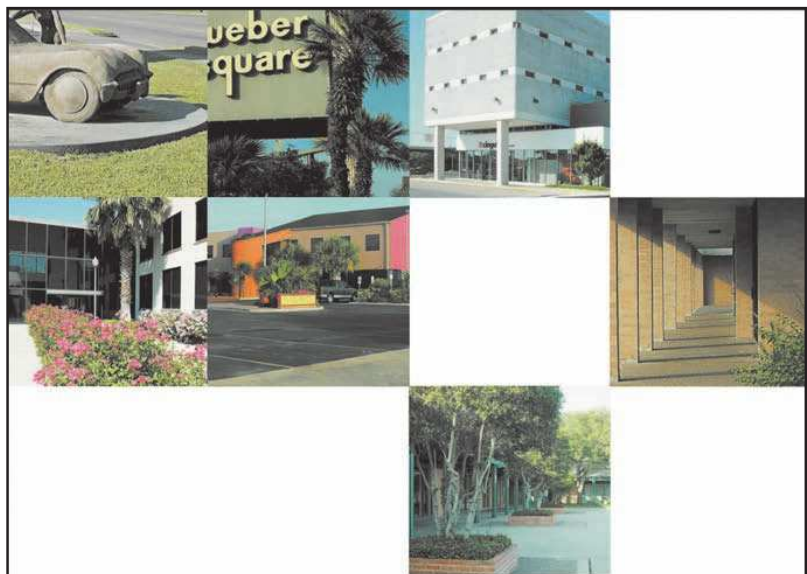
After identifying an unmet need in the community, Driscoll Children's Health Plan, Diabetech, and the Community Action Corporation of South Texas (CACOST) partnered to win the ALCANCE Health Outcomes Project (AHOP) grant, which funded the project. Over the past several years, Dr. Ponder and his staff have tested several versions of the wireless technology.

"This latest technology is easier than plug and play," noted Ponder.

Of course, like many new advances in healthcare, Driscoll's wireless blood sugar monitoring program is being measured to better understand its impact as compared to patients undergoing conventional care. The hope is that patient behaviors can be changed and sustained over time thanks to the simplicity of the technology and insight readily available from a knowledgeable diabetes specialist team.



The GlucoMON device is used by Driscoll Children's Hospital to better assist those afflicted with diabetes. This wireless device enables doctors to monitor diabetes patients without routine visits and allows for better, more effective treatment.



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