

Apple hires medical experts, users to check the iWatch for health concerns?

Though Apple's latest product category is all but officially confirmed, there are still a lot of questions as to what features it will have. Adding to the speculation are new reports that Apple hired several medical researchers to consult on exclusive iWatch sensors monitoring heart rate, blood pressure, step counter and the like.

The researchers have been culled from several high profile medical institutions such as Masimo Corp, Sano Intelligence, O2 MedTech and Vital Connect, according to the report by Reuters.

Prior rumoured features includes sleep tracking, making the iWatch a wearable gadget to use 24/7, as Apple also enlisted the services of Roy J.E.M. Raymann, sleep monitoring expert and former Philips Research senior scientist. This would be one feature the iWatch competition would be far behind in matching, if they get it right.

Another medical researcher who may be next in Apple's line of acquisitions is Dr. Divya Nag, founder of StartX Med and co-founder of another startup company that is focusing on stem cell research to treat heart disease. According to Reuters, Dr. Nag is currently working on an unspecified healthcare product that, given her background, may be connected to the other recent hires of Apple.

High-level Apple executives also met with the directors of the American Food and Drug Administration regarding mobile medical applications last month, according to the New York Times. Though the details of the meeting have yet to be disclosed, it seems indicative of a clear push from Apple's side to make the next generation of gadgets, including the iWatch, a health conscious option.

These reports are also clearly in line with prior reports of Healthbook app, a rumoured app set for release with the iOS 8 that is supposed to monitor and store fitness metrics. Features include a step counter, calorie counter, distance counter and weight loss monitor, much like other current fitness wearables such as the NikeFuel Band SE and Fitbit Force. Both companies who are also set to incorporate similar features into their apps for the iPhone 5S, though it is unclear as to if Nike or Fitbit are involved in the development of Healthbook as well. Nike recently announced the cessation of production of its FuelBand hardware beyond the FuelBand SE, lending further speculation as to their involvement in development of the iWatch.

Additional features not possible with the iPhone or iPad may be included for the iWatch, such as hydration level monitoring and possibly even glucose level monitoring. The latter of which would be possible via something similar to Google's smart lens prototype which is a contact lens able to measure the glucose level of the user's tears.

These reports of high-level deal making and hiring of experts are in any case highly indicative of Apple stepping up their game to provide serious competition to other wrist-worn gadgets such as Android Wear and Moto 360.