

## Medical Practice Trends Podcast #23

### Mobile Health and Advances in Mobile Technology, with guest Joseph Kim MD

**Peter:** This is Peter J. Polack M.D. with Medical Practice Trends podcast. Our guest today is Dr. Joseph Kim, president of Medical Communications Media, Inc. Welcome, Dr. Kim.

**Dr. Kim:** Thanks for having me.

**Peter:** Our topic today is Mobile Health and Advances in Mobile Technology. First can you tell us a little bit about your background and what interested you in this industry?

**Dr. Kim:** My background is I work in a company where we develop continuing medical education activities. We use the web a lot – the Internet and different web browsing technologies – to deliver our continuing medical education. But there was growing interest on how physicians were learning on mobile devices, predominantly when the iPhone become really popular. Before that, there was a lot of text-based education that was available on PDAs and those kinds of devices, but really the iPhone revolutionized a lot within the health care community – especially among physicians.

Today we find ourselves in an era where it's not just about the phones, but really slate devices, tablets and so forth. It was kind of a cross section where my day job and working in education, as well as my interests in technology in general, allowed me to learn more about this topic and dig deep into the different kinds of things that are happening within this industry and then to write about them on some of the websites that I've actually created over the last few years, and to blog about them, to correspond with the different industries and learn what companies are doing and how physicians are using these technologies. It's really opened up my eyes to see what's actually happening out there in the world today.

**Peter:** Does it seem to you that the consumer electronic field is sort of leaving the enterprise – or at least in the health related field – behind as far as the application of this technology?

**Dr. Kim:** I think the consumer field is advancing so quickly and patients, as consumers, are using these devices and different applications that are out there.

When it comes to the health care professional community, what I have found traditionally is that most physicians, especially, tend to be later adopters of technology. There's of course a group of physicians who are really eager and are the early adopters, but in general I find that most of them tend to be a little bit slower and later to adopt.

In that regards, there's so much happening on the consumer side, physicians are learning about it kind of later and incorporating it slower and later. That's one movement.

The other big movement that's happening is within the medical school communities, most of the entering medical students and residents are certainly much more technology savvy. They're entering med school with smartphones, whether it was because they had them in college or they had them while they were working. It's part of their daily workflow. They're entering residency, they're entering practice, using these tools on a regular basis; therefore it's easier for them to incorporate newer

technologies and digital technologies in these forms of wireless communication into not only their personal lives, but also into their professional lives.

**Peter:** This I guess was a generational thing up to a point, but maybe not so much anymore.

**Dr. Kim:** Right. I would say it's not so much anymore. It's becoming harder to stereotype. We certainly see a lot of early adopter physicians who are older. Certainly just because someone is, say, in their early 30s or mid-30s, you can't automatically assume that they're tech-savvy either. There's a lot of people where there are still some gaps and divides.

But I think overall, as this form of technology – particularly mobile technology – becomes more ubiquitous, we are reaching a leveling field where we're seeing that more and more people have access to the same kind of thing. At least they have them in their pockets. How they're using them might really vary, but at least they have them, so they have the capabilities there. I think over the next couple of years as slate devices like the iPad and smartphones ranging from Blackberries to iPhones permeate the health care environment, we're going to find that they're being used in all sorts of different ways.

**Peter:** What would you say is the biggest challenge of integrating the current technology into the existing EHR system?

**Dr. Kim:** One of the bigger challenges – especially if you primarily use a phone – is that the screen is really small. There are people, for instance, where they want to access their electronic health record on their iPhone. It doesn't really make a lot of sense to try to zoom in and out or to navigate things on such a small screen.

That barrier has really been overcome with a large device like a slate tablet, like an iPad. Now comes the question of: what do you do on your phone and what do you do on the iPad? The devices today are capable of doing essentially the same exact thing. The only key difference is the iPad has a larger screen.

We're kind of in an age right now where we're seeing people transitioning from one to the next. They're not really sure what they should be doing on one versus another. It's going to be interesting to see how this trend changes over time. Will we reach an era where when you go out to eat in a restaurant, everyone has an iPad or some kind of device like it? When you go out to the movies or theater, everyone is carrying their mobile device in addition to their phone? Or will it really be a single device that they carry?

These are some unanswered questions today, but as of right now, I think the screen size barrier has really been overcome with these larger devices. Now comes the question of: when do you use the large device versus the smaller device?

**Peter:** So the futurists 10-20 years ago predicted that it would be convergence of technology and we'd all have Dick Tracy type wrist watches that did everything. The reality is that's probably not the case.

**Dr. Kim:** I think there are elements of that that might be true. I say that because there are people out there who are essentially abandoning their traditional laptops and desktops. They're trying to do everything on their iPad. What is the future of these devices going to look like? Will they be pocketable? Maybe they will fold open and you fold it up and now you've got this big screen and you can fold it up and put it into your pocket. Flexible LCD screen technology. There are things like that that are all being investigated.

Will it be something on your watch? I think those are still possibilities, but I think right now it's more just making sure that people are familiar with the technology, with what they're capable of, and using it because it can significantly improve clinical workflow, it can improve workflow efficiencies, it could reduce medical errors. There's a lot of strength and ways that they're advantageous, but many people just don't realize what they are. They may have an iPad, but they're only using it to browse the web and check their e-mail. If that's all they're using it for, then they're not really leveraging those additional benefits.

**Peter:** What are the biggest challenges as far as privacy and security with these devices? It seems that the EHR software vendors are either concerned about sharing their proprietary information, or maybe they're not quite as interested with integrating some of these devices. What do you see as the biggest challenge in that area?

**Dr. Kim:** Some of the privacy and security issues really revolve around a few areas, one being theft. Frankly, a mobile device is easier to lose whether you're in a hospital, an office-based setting or whether you're out in the store or shopping mall. Theft is a big concern, especially if that device can access patient data. Whether the patient data resides on that or whether it accesses it wirelessly, if it still is able to access patient data, then theft could lead to a big can getting unopened. That's a big concern.

The other big concern is just communicating with patients. What is the appropriate level of communication? Today we're living in an era where everyone is talking about social media, Facebook and so forth, so when you're talking about a mobile device whether it's a phone, an iPad, or an Android tablet, Blackberry or whatever it might be, they've got the capabilities of integrating with social networks.

What is the appropriate level of communication to preserve patient privacy, to make sure that you don't become the next story on the Wall Street Journal about a physician who got fired from a hospital for doing something inappropriately on a social media channel? Those are some of the key concerns right now that really surround this area.

**Peter:** If someone wanted to get a little more information about your blog, where would they find you?

**Dr. Kim:** One of the sites that I run is a site called [www.MedicalSmartphones.com](http://www.MedicalSmartphones.com). I write about a lot of the different apps that are out there, as well as the different ways physicians are using mobile technology. There are several other sites I manage and run, but MedicalSmartphones.com is probably one of the leading sites right now that's available as a resource. It also has my contact information. It allows people to reach me with questions. I'm happy to answer them to the best of my ability.

**Peter:** Thanks so much.

**Dr. Kim:** Thanks for having me.