

MCB Opening – Health Apps

Good morning and welcome to our Disrupters Series hearings on mobile health apps. As a doctor who has served the people of North Texas for over 25 years, I am particularly delighted to explore this emerging technology within the health care system and examine how it is transforming the way in which doctors, patients, and consumers approach and manage the delivery of care.

Health apps are powered by the deployment of advanced broadband internet technology and near-ubiquitous smartphone adoption. The draw of mobile health care tools and services, and health apps in particular, lies in their potential to radically improve health care. The potential comes in part from enabling both sides of the equation, Doctors and patients.

For health care providers, health apps enable constant, instant and real-time access to patient data, helping to streamline workflows and decision-making processes. So the data is both more complete and more accessible. Doctors are also able to remotely monitor patient health care conditions, collaborate and implement care.

The emergence of mobile apps within the health care system is particularly exciting because of how they empower patients to gain access to care and manage their health. Patients are using apps to track their symptoms, send vital sign information to doctors, and set-up medication adherence reminders. Patients are also using the technology to gain faster access to more routine health care services that are often inconvenient and time-consuming. Apps available on the market today create virtual waiting rooms where users can:

- receive prescriptions,
- engage in secure face-to-face video consultations with physicians,
- compare prices for care,
- and make payments to a health care provider.

By enabling physicians to remotely monitor a patient's health condition or empowering consumers with information to engage in healthier living, health apps are driving more robust health care management and oversight from both patients and providers. This can help improve the quality and continuum of care.

There are important issues that need to be addressed as more individuals turn to health care apps. Some of these issues include:

- Understanding how health apps are impacting the overall quality of care compared to in-person visits;
- Whether the proper financial incentives are in place to increase the adoption of health apps
- What additional infrastructure is needed to support the development and use of health apps;

- Legal and policy barriers to health app adoption at both the federal and state level;
- How to adequately educate patients and consumers about the capabilities and limitations of health apps;
- And whether the regulatory framework governing our health care system today is keeping pace with the life-saving innovations made available through these apps. I look forward to examining each of these issues throughout our discussion today.

In addition, as with all Internet-connected things, applications, and devices, adequately addressing the privacy and security implications associated with health apps will be essential to driving this market forward. We have seen that healthcare data has a growing appeal among identity thieves and other bad actors – just look at the recent data breaches and an increase in ransomware attacks. It is critical that every actor in this space start by addressing privacy and security. If industry fails to do this then Congress will be forced to address it. And unfortunately, whatever Congress would do would likely limit the potential in this space and limit the success of the health apps market.

Throughout the disrupter series we have explored how technology is changing business, creating jobs and improving the quality of life for Americans everywhere. The breakthrough of mobile apps into the health care system opens a significant opportunity to improve patient care, reduce health care costs, and make health care more accessible and affordable to all Americans.

I thank the witnesses for their testimonies and I look forward to a thoughtful discussion on this topic.