Amazon's Alexa Skills Kit Is a Health Care Game Changer

Alexa can now securely transmit and receive personalized medical information.

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Amazon has made its way into the health care market with the purchase of an online pharmacy, the expansion of its commerce to include the sale of supplies to hospitals and the launch of its own line of over-the-counter products. Now, the tech and e-commerce giant has gone one step further and introduced HIPAA-compliant software that allows developers to create new health tools for Alexa, reports STAT.

The Alexa Skills Kit software helps developers build voice programs, or tools, that give Amazon's virtual assistant the ability to securely transmit a patient's private information in compliance with the health privacy law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

"Every day developers are inventing with voice to build helpful and convenient experiences for their customers," announced Amazon in a blog post. "These new [Alexa] skills are designed to help customers manage a variety of health care needs at home simply using voice."

Amazon invited six health care providers to build voice programs using the kit to create new tools for their businesses, which are described below:

- Express Scripts: This leading pharmacy services organization created a tool that enables members to check the status of home delivery prescriptions and receive Alexa notifications when shipped.
- Cigna Health Today: The global health service company's voice program allows eligible employees with one of the company's large national accounts to manage their health improvement goals and increase opportunities for earning personalized wellness incentives.
- My Children's Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS): With Boston Children's Hospital's new tool, parents and caregivers of children in the ERAS program can provide updates on their

children’s recovery progress to their care teams and receive information regarding post-op appointments.

- Swedish Health Connect: Developed by Providence St. Joseph Health, a health care system with 51 hospitals across seven states and 829 clinics, this tool allows customers to find a nearby urgent care center and schedule same-day appointments.
- Atrium Health: Through this health care system of more than 40 hospitals and 900 locations, customers in North and South Carolina can use a tool to find a nearby urgent care center and schedule a same-day appointment.
- Livongo: Members of this leading consumer digital health company can now query their last blood sugar reading and blood sugar measurement trends and receive insights and personalized health nudges using the company’s new tool.

Amazon plans to give additional developers access to the kit in the future, potentially making it easier for people to access and manage their health care services and needs.

Click here to read our earlier coverage about how Amazon’s Alexa could one day be able to check a person’s blood sugar.

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