

New iPhone app 'Outbreaks Near Me' locates H1N1, infectious diseases

September 1 2009



Outbreaks Near Me pinpoints a user's location and maps local outbreak reports.
Credit: HealthMap

A new iPhone application, created by researchers at Children's Hospital Boston in collaboration with the MIT Media Lab, enables users to track and report outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as H1N1 (swine flu), on the ground in real time.

The application, "Outbreaks Near Me," builds upon the mission and proven capability of HealthMap, an online resource that collects, filters,

maps and disseminates information about emerging [infectious diseases](#), and provides a new, contextualized view of a user's specific location - pinpointing outbreaks that have been reported in the vicinity of the user and offering the opportunity to search for additional [outbreak](#) information by location or disease.

Additional functionality of Outbreaks Near Me is the ability to set alerts that will notify a user on their device or by e-mail when new outbreaks are reported in their proximity, or if a user enters a new area of activity.



Users may submit outbreak information to the HealthMap team for review and posting on the worldwide map. Credit: HealthMap

"We hope individuals will find the new app to be a useful source of outbreak information - locally, nationally, and globally," says HealthMap co-founder John Brownstein, PhD, assistant professor in the Children's Hospital Informatics Program (CHIP). "As people are equipped with

more knowledge and awareness of infectious disease, the hope is that they will become more involved and proactive about [public health](#)."

The new application also features an option for users to submit an outbreak report. This will enable individuals in cities and countries around the world to interact with the HealthMap team and participate in the public health surveillance process. Users may take photos - of situations and scenarios of, and/or leading to, disease - with their iPhone and submit them to the HealthMap system for review and eventual posting as an alert on the worldwide map.

"This is grassroots, participatory epidemiology," says HealthMap co-founder Clark Freifeld, a PhD student at the MIT Media Lab and research software developer at CHIP. "In releasing this app we aim to empower citizens in the cause of public health, not only by providing ready access to real-time information, but also by encouraging them to contribute their own knowledge, expertise, and observations. In enabling participation in surveillance, we also expect to increase global coverage and identify outbreaks earlier."

More information: For more information on Outbreaks Near Me, visit: [iphone.php](#)" target="_blank">healthmap.org/[iphone.php](#) .

Source: Children's Hospital Boston ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: New iPhone app 'Outbreaks Near Me' locates H1N1, infectious diseases (2009, September 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-09-iphone-app-outbreaks-h1n1-infectious.html>

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