# Facing up to online health care

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When our medical records are all in the cloud and available to be discussed among our health care professionals via online networks for diagnostics, treatment, and training purposes, how will we, as patients, know that our sensitive and personal information remains secure and private? This could be especially problematic as connected mobile devices become increasingly common in hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

The task of securing health information is a growing problem for even the best-prepared organisations given that criminals will endeavour to breach security barriers to harvest whatever data they can for identity theft and other fraudulent activities.

Now, Qurban Memon and Asma Fayes Mustafa of the College of Engineering, at UAE University in Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates, are as concerned as anyone. Writing in International Journal of Electronic health care, they explore the possibility of a mobile, private social network for health care workers on the Android mobile operating system. With a framework of data-driven privacy and feasibility in mind, they explore how such an m-health system might work.

The team explains how data from sensors and mobile devices access patient location and movement and so calories burned, heart rate, blood pressure, nearby friends and contacts and potentially other data of use to one's doctor. The "social" side of the network might also allow data to be shared selectively via the network to a patient's partner, parent, or carer too. In addition, weather conditions and pollen count might be embedded to generate pertinent alerts. As a proof of principle the team has

successfully used a well-known online social networking site to test the principles of sharing, social and security. The use of the Android operating systems provides hooks into the likes of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter with their software development kit, the team reports. However, they suggest that an open source SDK would be more appropriate.

**More information:** "Exploring mobile health in a private online social network." *International Journal of Electronic Healthcare* DOI: 10.1504/IJEH.2015.071643