

New software could help people with multiple prescriptions

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With \$25,000 in VentureLab funding from the Georgia Research Alliance, Dr. Kent Guion, associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Allied Health Sciences, is working with an independent consultant to test and market a program that allows patients to print out a "calendar-type" listing of their current medications. The goal is to help them remember often-complicated prescription schedules. Credit: Medical College of Georgia

Multiple prescriptions can be confusing: knowing which pill is which, when to take what medication and what pills have special instructions.

A Medical College of Georgia physical therapist and associate dean wants to reduce consumer confusion with software that creates a calendar-like printout every time a prescription is filled.

"The idea came to me when a relative who was taking multiple medications for asthma came to stay with me," says Dr. W. Kent Guion, associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Allied Health Sciences. "She was often confused about which pills she had to take in the morning and which pills she had to take at night. Many of her medications also looked the same and it was easy for her to get one confused with the other."

Medication errors lead to an increase in doctor's visits and hospitalizations, which drive up health care costs.

With \$25,000 in VentureLab funding from the Georgia Research Alliance, Dr. Guion is working with an independent consultant to test and market a program that allows patients to print out a "calendar-type" listing of their current medications. The goal is to help them remember often-complicated prescription schedules.

"The printout also shows warnings about similar-looking pills to protect patients from taking the wrong medication," he says.

The computer program interfaces with computer software at major pharmacies.

"The idea is that pharmacists won't have to do any extra work," Dr. Guion says. "When the prescription comes in, they can scan it and the calendar printout will automatically generate. It won't require any extra keystrokes."

He is testing an early version of the program in an independent North Carolina pharmacy.

Dr. Guion hopes the program eventually will serve as the centerpiece for developing a software company to maintain it. That company will

administer and update software, maintain data about medications in the software library and collaborate with pharmacies to implement the software and improve patient safety and compliance with medications.

Eventually, Dr. Guion says, the program could be tailored to online pharmacies where 20 percent of Americans now fill their prescriptions, or targeted toward individuals who could use the program on their home computers.

"While I am excited about the potential, I completely understand that this process is in the very early stages," he says. "The first round of funding is used to evaluate the market potential and to establish the most appropriate path to commercialization. Fortunately I've been working side-by-side with Dr. Michael Gabridge, MCG associate vice president for technology transfer and economic development, and experienced programmers and pharmacists. They've all provided first-rate support throughout the process."

Source: Medical College of Georgia

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