

Wearing your medical history

IF IN THE COMING MONTHS, you notice a patient wearing a square wristwatch that looks unusual, you might want to take a second look. The device could hold a treasure trove of data about that patient's medical history.

The MEDICOM Medical I.D. Wristband may look like a calculator watch from the 1970s, but it can store and display a patient's complete medical history. The device was created to be used in emergency medical situations, but its 2 gigabytes of storage space makes it useful in all kinds of health care settings.

James Klink, CEO of MEDICOM Technologies Inc., which is based in Hawaii, says the idea for the Wristband came from his own experience living with diabetes. While he always knew he should wear some kind of medical bracelet, he didn't like what was available at the time.

"I didn't like the stigma attached with having a bracelet dangling from my wrist with a chronic disease icon stamped on the top," Mr. Klink says. "But I also didn't like the fact that the bracelets didn't give a lot of information you'd need in an emergency."

He started working on the device 20 years ago, but micro computers were still in their infancy. When he saw a mass storage device a few years back that he could modify to display medical records, he knew that the technology had finally caught up to his concept.

The Wristband stores information that includes personal demographics; medical conditions; medications, including dosages and times taken; advance directives; images like photo IDs and X-rays; medical and lab results; insurance, physician and pharmacy information; allergies; medical history; and special treatment requests. Its 1.5-inch screen can be accessed by the patient or by a health care provider if a patient is unconscious or disabled.

To input information into the device, users type information into a template on their computer and then transfer it to the Wristband via a standard USB interface. Medical personnel can view or upload data from the device to their computers via the same connection.

Mr. Klink hopes that the device's features will make it popular with chronically ill patients of all ages—including adolescents, not just older patients. In addition to storing medical information, the Wristband functions as a watch and FM radio, and it can store and display photos, songs and even voice recordings of your medical history, which emergency personnel can listen to if needed.

The Wristband starts at about \$115 and requires no annual fee (www.medicomtech.com). **TH**

