



Using A Closed Social Network To Improve Chronic Disease Management

By now, pretty much everyone knows about social networks and what they have to offer. They are open to the public and anyone from around the world can join. However, you may not be quite as familiar with the term “closed social network”. A closed social network is a private network designed to limit the network access to only those people who are invited to join. It allows its users to maintain complete and total control over their information, including *what* they share, and *who* they share with. Most social networks allow “friends” from all over the world to see what you’re doing – fine if you’re going to a movie. If you’re working with your doctor to improve the condition of your chronic disease, you’d really need a closed social network.

Button Systems Incorporated of Castleton, Vermont has developed a closed social network to help patients manage their chronic disease in a restricted, controlled environment. The premise is quite simple. First, a doctor meets with a patient during an office visit and discusses their particular chronic disease like diabetes or cardiovascular disease. During the conversation, the doctor tells the patient that they are a prime candidate for using our closed social network. They hand the patient a brochure that recaps everything about our closed social network – what it is, what it can do for the patient, and how the patient can join it. The patient goes home and decides that joining the closed social network is a good idea. They visit the web site found on the brochure, answer a few simple questions, and then enter the code found on their brochure (which is unique to them and acts as their own personal key). In just a couple of seconds, they’ve successfully joined our closed social network.

The closed social network gives patients the tools to make better decisions and to take actions to improve their health – the very foundation of chronic disease management. It provides patients with informative articles, announcements, and other valuable resources about their chronic disease – providing knowledge that they can use to make changes in their lifestyle. It contains recipes that will help them eat healthier, and also contains a listing of exercises that the patient can do. As any doctor will tell you, information, diet and exercise are instrumental in improving one’s health. We then, of course, have the social component.

Patients will have the ability to choose whether or not they’d like to receive daily and weekly text messages that offer motivation and inspiration. They can choose to receive reminders about upcoming or overdue visits and lab tests. Patients will have the ability to send email invitations to their friends and family, asking them to join them on our closed social network to be a part of the patient’s “fan club.” Once their fans have joined, the patient can then send physical activity challenges back and forth with their fans, thus reinforcing the exercise component of chronic disease management.



BUTTON SYSTEMS, INC.

The closed social network also has a rewards system built in, where the patient can earn points through participation within the site, through improving vitals, reading articles, meeting goals that they have set, and playing games. Earning points provides the patient with a sense of accomplishment and shows that they are on the right path when it comes to their chronic disease management. In addition, the patient's doctor or healthcare organization may choose to partner with local vendors to allow the patient to redeem their points for medical supplies or other goods.

Providers also benefit from the closed social network. They have the ability to monitor the activity of patients they've referred to see who has and who hasn't joined the system within a certain period of time. They can keep a finger on the pulse of the number of fans their patients are adding, and even see a demographic breakdown of their patients who are male or female within certain age groups who are using the closed social network. Providers will also have the ability to run a report that calculates patients with overdue vitals and lab tests by gender. Finally, providers can run a report that shows goal setting and attainment by gender.

Our closed social network sits in a secure web environment and can be adapted for any chronic disease. It also interfaces seamlessly with our other web-based products, including our patient-centric medical home and our chronic disease registry applications. It can also optionally interface with an electronic medical record (EMR) system for automatic data updating of lab tests and vitals.

If you would like more information about our closed social network, or any of our other healthcare products, please visit our web site at <http://www.bsi-vt.com>.