Sparrow and MSU researchers work on new app to help heart patients stay healthy

A collaboration between a physician at Sparrow Health System in Lansing and Michigan State University researchers will result in a new mobile app that will allow those at risk of heart disease to monitor what they eat, how they live, and make better choices.

“We are trying to empower them with this tool in their hand to see how the choices are affecting their risks,” said MSU researcher Pang-Ning Tan, an associate professor of computer science and engineering.

The research is being conducted through the Sparrow/MSU Center for Innovation and Research, a formal partnership between Sparrow and MSU. MSU’s intellectual capital and Sparrow’s community-based clinicians work collaboratively to develop innovative approaches in healthcare.

Currently in a prototype phase, the app -- called mHeart -- will help users make choices about what they eat based on the data they enter about themselves. mHeart will tell them the risks involved in their food decisions.

It will, in short, “encourage people to make healthy choices,” Tan said.

The app is specifically designed for patients who are overweight, obese, or otherwise at risk for heart disease. Tan and
his PhD student Courtland Van Dam are developing the prototype. They are working in collaboration with former MSU researcher Jina Huh, PhD, who is currently at the University of California San Diego and Barbara Given, PhD, RN, FAAN, from the MSU College of Nursing. Given is also chair of the Sparrow Board of Directors.

The project also involves Sparrow’s Paul Entler, DO, medical director of Sparrow Weight Management. Entler said he’s seen patients try any number of health-based apps, but most concentrate on keeping track of what they have already eaten.

“There are so many journaling apps out there,” he said. “The goal is to make an app where people can actually see something concrete that can change their behavior.”

**Sparrow Health System**
Sparrow is a member of the prestigious Mayo Clinic Care Network that includes hospitals in Lansing, St. Johns, Ionia and Carson City as well as Physicians Health Plan, Sparrow Physicians Health Network, the Sparrow Medical Group, and the Michigan Athletic Club. Sparrow is affiliated with Michigan State University’s three human health colleges. For more information, visit Sparrow.org.

**Related Website:** Story courtesy of Sparrow Health System
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