

Taking care of the 'm' in mHealth

As healthcare consumes an ever-higher proportion of global gross domestic product (GDP), solutions exploiting mobile connectivity are seen by many as a cost-effective way of making high quality healthcare more affordable and more accessible. From lifestyle coaching to real-time monitoring of chronic conditions, the attraction of mHealth rests on its potential to reach users both in their homes and when they are out and about.



Key Benefits

- Recognised & accepted by major operator groups worldwide
- Supported by the world's leading test equipment vendors and test labs
- Harmonization of test requirements
- Can reduce duplication of testing
- 479 handsets & mobile devices certified in 2011

Wireless modules allow mobile connectivity to be added to an increasingly wide variety of dedicated m-health devices. Smartphones can run mHealth applications that can interface with specialised mHealth accessories.

Critical success factors

Successful mHealth solutions will be those that gain and retain the confidence of patients, clinicians, healthcare providers and governments.

An important requirement will be an ability to reach a very high percentage of the relevant population groups. Given localised differences between the coverage of different mobile networks, mHealth solutions that are capable of connecting to more than one operator are likely to be preferred.

The mobile telecommunications industry defines a device's ability to communicate with different networks (and other devices) irrespective of vendor as its interoperability.

Demonstrating interoperability

Since 1999, the Global Certification Forum (GCF) - a partnership of network operators, device manufacturers and the test industry - has maintained an independent certification programme that demonstrates interoperability between mobile devices and networks.

With its ethos of 'test once, use anywhere', GCF certification has made a significant contribution to the global spread, scale and success of GSM, 3G and successive 3GPP technologies.

GCF Certification is recognised and trusted by operators serving billions of people worldwide. GCF-Certified devices are often rolled-out with different operators across multiple territories simultaneously.

Most mobile phone manufacturers embrace GCF Certification.

Certification for mHealth

In the case of dedicated mHealth devices, the cost of wireless communications components is likely to represent a relatively small proportion of the total cost of an mHealth system. However the recall costs for devices that fail to operate reliably could be substantial and the reputation of the mHealth provider could be seriously undermined.

By using wireless modules that are GCF-Certified, an mHealth solution provider can take advantage of GCF's optimised Certification scheme for connected devices. This significantly reduces the volume of interoperability and conformance testing required to assure interoperability between an mHealth device and commercial networks.

GCF is liaising with the Continua Health Alliance on requirements for a common and effective certification process for the mobile communications functionality of mHealth devices. This work can help accelerate market development for mHealth devices while minimizing the testing of mobile connectivity.

More information

- GCF's guidelines for the certification of connected devices incorporating GCF-Certified wireless modules can be downloaded from the GCF website
- For information on Continua Health Alliance, visit www.continuaalliance.org

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