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<b>Title</b>	Getting smart with smartphones: emergency medical information storage among adult emergency department patients
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## Getting smart with smartphones: emergency medical information storage among adult emergency department patients

TO THE EDITOR: Patients presenting to an emergency department (ED) may be unable to communicate with treating clinicians. Immediate access to emergency medical information is essential to providing optimal care and avoiding harm.

Smartphone medical alert apps, such as those pre-installed on the two major operating systems (iOS [Apple], Android [Google]), allow patients to store emergency medical information that is accessible to clinicians when a patient is incapacitated and the smartphone is locked. Similar to medical alert bracelets, these apps are designed to store basic emergency medical information. Via a self-administered app, patients can record as much emergency medical information as they feel comfortable sharing. This information can be rapidly accessed from the smartphone's locked screen, bypassing default security features.

We recently asked a convenience sample of 250 adult ED patients, well enough to complete a survey, to complete a questionnaire assessing their smartphone usage, familiarity, attitudes and barriers towards storing emergency medical information on smartphone apps. Ethics approval was obtained through the St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee.

Two hundred patients completed the survey. The mean age of respondents was 39 years (95% CI, 37–41 years). Most owned a smartphone and had it with them in the ED. Only 15% (31/200) currently used an emergency medical information app, with most using the default pre-installed app. The commonest barrier to use was a lack of awareness or familiarity with the app. Once informed, most patients (97%; 194/200) were willing to use such an app in the future (Box).

Patients who have privacy and security concerns about the government-controlled My Health Record may view storing emergency medical information on smartphones as a safer option. The depth of information on a smartphone would be considerably less than that accessible via My Health Record, but in an emergency, some information is better than none.

Using smartphones to store emergency medical information may lead to better emergency care for incapacitated patients. There is enthusiasm from patients to embrace this technology. General practitioners and other clinicians are well placed to inform patients and facilitate its adoption. ED clinicians should be encouraged to check the phones of incapacitated patients in the initial assessment and triage phase for the presence of potentially lifesaving information.

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[Box]

**Number of patients currently storing or prepared to store emergency medical information on a smartphone app, by type of information**

	Currently storing ( <i>n</i> = 31)		Prepared to store ( <i>n</i> = 194)	
	Number	95% CI	Number	95% CI
Name	27 (87%)	74–97%	171 (88%)	84–93%
Date of birth	26 (84%)	71–94%	148 (76%)	70–82%
Emergency contact	21 (68%)	48–84%	179 (92%)	88–96%
Medical conditions	16 (52%)	36–68%	168 (87%)	81–91%
Medications	11 (36%)	19–52%	162 (84%)	78–89%
Allergies	9 (29%)	14–48%	177 (91%)	87–95%
Organ donor status	11 (36%)	19–52%	173 (89%)	85–94%
Blood type	13 (42%)	26–58%	184 (95%)	92–98%