

New iPhone Locates H1N1 Infection

Washington: (IANS) A new iPhone application enables users to track and report outbreaks of infectious diseases like H1N1 or swine flu in real time.

The application, "Outbreaks Near Me", builds upon the mission and proven capability of HealthMap, an online resource that collects, filters, maps and disseminates information about emerging infectious diseases.

It provides a new, contextualised view of a user's specific location - pinpointing outbreaks that have been reported near the user and offering the opportunity to search for additional outbreak information by location or disease.

Besides 'Outbreaks Near Me' set alerts that will notify a user on their device or by e-mail when new outbreaks are nearby, or if a user enters a new area of activity.

"We hope individuals will find the new application to be a useful source of outbreak information - locally, nationally, and globally," says HealthMap co-founder John Brownstein, assistant professor in the Children's Hospital (Boston) Informatics Program (CHIP).

"As people are equipped with more knowledge and awareness of infectious disease, the hope is that they will become more involved and proactive about public health."

Users can also submit an outbreak report.

This will enable individuals in cities and countries worldwide to interact with the HealthMap team and participate in the public health surveillance process.

Users may take photos - of situations and scenarios of, and/or leading to, disease - with their iPhone and submit them to the HealthMap system for review and eventual posting as an alert on the worldwide map.

"This is grassroots, participatory epidemiology," says HealthMap co-founder Clark Freifeld, a PhD student at the MIT Media Lab and research software developer at CHIP," according to a Children's Hospital release.

HealthMap was founded in 2006 and mines the Internet - searching disparate data sources such as news reports, curated personal accounts, official alerts, blogs and chat rooms - to track and map infectious disease outbreaks.



Blackberry To Offer Better Browser

Toronto: (IANS) Browsing on your BlackBerry smart phone could soon become a much better experience.

Customers have been complaining about BlackBerry's browser since the launch of Apple's iPhone which offers better browsing experience. To improve browsing on its smart phones, the BlackBerry maker has acquired Toronto-based company called Torch Mobile.

The company, which makes the Iris mobile browser, will give BlackBerry edge in competition with other smart phones, including Apple's iPhone.

No details of the deal have been made public by the BlackBerry maker (RIM) based at Hamilton near Toronto. But Torch Mobile's employees have already joined the BlackBerry software development team.

In a statement, the Toronto company said it

is "excited to announce that our company has been acquired by Research In Motion (RIM), one of the most renowned mobile technology companies in the world.

"Our team of developers will join RIM's global organization and will now be focused on utilizing our WebKit-based mobile browser expertise to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of the BlackBerry platform."

Torch Mobile's expertise in mobile browser technology will provide

BlackBerry smart phones with a better browsing platform from next year.

Analysts say BlackBerry needs to fix its browser quickly as it seeks to expand its base away from corporate-types to general consumers. As the smart phone market booms, they say, BlackBerry cannot just remain a device for secure e-mail. It will have to improve its functionality in browsing.



Sony Plans To Launch 3-D TV Next Year

New York: (DPA) The Japanese electronics company Sony Corp plans to introduce a liquid-crystal-display television capable of playing 3-D programming by the end of next year, The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday.

Sony is to announce its plans for the new TV next week at the IFA consumer electronics show in Berlin, an unnamed source familiar with the plans told the Journal.

Movie studios and electronics producers see

3-D video for the home as a big money maker, and Sony's rivals, including South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co and LG Electronics Inc and Japan's Panasonic Corp, have said they plan to introduce 3-D products as well.

At the moment, however, 3-D films in theatres are just getting off the ground, so the initial choice of such movies on video would be limited.

The 3-D plans come as Sony has lost money in its television division for five years in a row and is undertaking cost-cutting measures.



Eat Melons To Keep BP Under Control



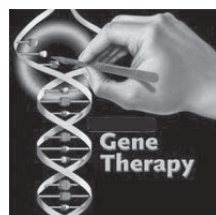
Washington: (IANS) Nutrition experts say there is no better way to lower blood pressure (BP) than by indulging in some of the season's potassium-rich fruit and vegetables.

"Melons like cantaloupe and watermelon are particularly high in potassium," says Lona Sandon, assistant professor of clinical nutrition at University of Texas-Southwestern (UTS) and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association.

"One-fourth of a cantaloupe contains 800 to 900 mg of potassium, roughly 20 percent of the recommended daily value."

Two cups of watermelon contains nearly 10 percent of the daily recommended value, says a UTS release. Sandon said dried apricots, avocados, figs, kiwi, oranges, raisins, dates, beans, potatoes, tomatoes and even grapefruit are other good sources of potassium.

Gene Therapy Can Nip Inherited Diseases



Washington: (IANS) Researchers believe they have developed one of the first forms of genetic therapy to nip inherited diseases in the bud. Specifically, the therapy would counteract diseases inherited by kids from mothers, through mutated DNA in cell mitochondria. They are tiny energy-producing structures in the cell, sometimes known as its power plants or batteries and also carry their own genetic material.

"We believe this discovery in non-human primates can rapidly be translated into human therapies aimed at preventing inherited disorders passed from mothers to their children through the mitochondrial DNA," said Shoukhrat

Mitalipov, study co-author.

Mitalipov, associate scientist at the Oregon Health & Science University's (OHSU) Oregon National Primate Research Centre (ONPRC), said these inherited disorders are certain forms of cancer, diabetes, infertility, myopathies and neurodegenerative diseases."

"Currently there are 150 known diseases caused by mutations of the mitochondrial DNA, and approximately one out of every 200 children is born with mitochondrial mutations," he said.

When an egg cell is fertilized by a sperm cell during reproduction, the embryo almost exclusively inherits the maternal mitochondria present in the egg.

This means that any disease-causing genetic mutations that a mother carries in her mitochondrial DNA can be passed on to her offspring.

The method developed by OHSU researchers transfers the mother's chromosomes to a donated egg that has had its chromosomes removed, but which has healthy mitochondria, thereby preventing the disease from being passed on to one's offspring.

Obesity Leads To Erectile Dysfunction



Washington: (IANS) Obesity is likely to render 30 to 40 percent males over 50 years more vulnerable to erectile dysfunction (ED).

The build-up of atherosclerotic plaque in the arteries of obese men can damage the arterial lining and contribute to elevated blood pressure (BP). Atherosclerosis is the condition in which an artery wall thickens as the result of a build-up of fatty materials such as cholesterol.

Besides atherosclerosis, hormonal changes that accompany obesity, including lower testosterone, increase the risk of ED. Modifiable risk factors for heart disease, such as excess weight, diabetes,

and hypertension, are generally the same as those for ED. Studies have shown that weight loss and increased physical activity can improve ED.

Adam Gilden Tsai from University of Colorado Denver (UC-D) and David Sarwer from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine illustrate these conditions with a mildly obese 48-year-old man with hypertension and ED. Even with the use of ED medication (tadalafil, Cialis, Eli Lilly), he was not able to achieve an erection adequate for intercourse.

After dietary counseling, a 4.6 percent weight reduction, and medication to lower his BP to within the normal range, the patient was able to achieve adequate erections with the use of ED medication as needed, said an UC-D release. The authors emphasize that "the complicated interplay of weight and other health conditions relate to common medical symptoms, such as ED.

Exercise Cuts Down Appetite, Burns Fat



Washington: (IANS) Exercise helps prevent weight regain after dieting by cutting down appetite and burning fat, says a new study.

Burning fat first and storing carbohydrates for use later in the day slows weight regain and may minimize overeating by signaling a sense of fullness to the brain. The University of Colorado-Denver (UC-D) study also found that exercise prevents the increase in fat cells that occurs during weight regain, challenging the conventional wisdom that the number of fat cells is set and cannot be altered by dietary or lifestyle changes.

These coordinated physiological changes in the brain and the body lower the 'defended' weight, that is, the weight that our physiology drives us to achieve, and suggest that the effects of exercise on these physiological processes may make it easier to stay on a diet, said an UC-D release.