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Polaris Health Directions Partners with MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper on Breast Cancer Pilot Project Using the Apple Watch

WAYNE, Pa. May 19, 2015 – Behavioral health technology company Polaris Health Directions (Polaris) and MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper (MD Anderson Cooper) have signed a memorandum of understanding to partner on an integrated medical-behavioral health pilot project, using the Apple Watch to capture behavioral data that could affect the courses and outcomes of treatment for breast cancer patients.

The partnership brings together MD Anderson Cooper’s expertise in oncology and Polaris’s deep experience in behavioral health science and innovative technology. It will leverage Polaris’s Polestar behavioral health outcomes management (BHOM) platform—an advanced data-collection-and-analytics platform that provides meaningful, actionable results for reporting on and monitoring of a patient’s expected treatment response.

“Our integrated BHOM platform has been helping to improve overall outcomes in patients throughout the U.S. via browsers and iPads. Through this breast cancer pilot, we hope to see even better patient outcomes with the addition of the Apple Watch,” said Tina Harralson, Ph.D., science director, Polaris Labs.

“Via our secure Polestar platform, behavioral data captured through the Apple Watch will combine with medical data from the patients’ electronic health records within the Cooper health system and population health data,” Dr. Harralson explained, adding that data will include treatment side effects, sleep information, physical activity levels, patient mood, and other inputs. “Advanced analytics applied to this mix will result in meaningful and actionable insights for patients and their care teams as treatment progresses.”

“The impact of the integration of behavioral health in cancer care is significant. A positive frame of mind can help a patient through all phases of diagnosis and treatment,” said Generosa Grana, MD, FACP, director of the MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper and head of the division of hematology/medical oncology at Cooper University Hospital.

“Patient engagement is a critical factor in successful treatment plans,” Dr. Grana continued. “We expect using the Apple Watch will help increase engagement and collect data that ultimately allows us to further refine treatment plans.”

She added: “Polaris and Cooper’s oncology team have been research partners for almost a decade and have collaborated on six studies related to behavioral health with funding from the National Institutes of Health. If results of this pilot prove promising, the partnership will pursue a National Cancer Institute research grant for a full-scale breast cancer project.”

Dr. Grana noted that MD Anderson Cooper’s director of behavioral medicine, Cori McMahon, Psy.D., will be medical project lead, working with Polaris on the breast cancer pilot.

Pilot Project Plans at a Glance

- Polaris will underwrite the devices (Apple Watch Sport 38mm models with pink straps) and development of the app, being responsible for configuration, scientific content design, deployment, monitoring, and support for the wearables platform.
- MD Anderson Cooper will select a group of breast cancer patients in active treatment, provide personnel and support, and will consult on product design and usability within the health network, as well as within patients’ non-institutional settings. Their health professionals will review the data captured and provide patient support based on the analysis of the data.
- The project will undergo review and ultimate approval by the Cooper Institutional Review Board. With the support of this board, MD Anderson Cooper and Polaris could then jointly publish project findings, at intervals to be determined.

About Polaris Health Directions

Polaris Health Directions is a behavioral health technology company dedicated to delivering innovative integrated medical-behavioral health solutions, leveraging its Polestar platform. Founded in 1997, Polaris has almost two decades of focused experience supported by more than \$13 million in research grants from the National Institutes of Health in partnership with preeminent universities and hospital systems.

About MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper

MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper, created in a partnership between Cooper University Healthcare and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, provides cancer patients with a multidisciplinary approach to diagnosis and treatment and a full range of supportive services. Patients benefit from MD Anderson’s proven treatment plans, expert clinicians and groundbreaking clinical trials. With multiple locations, including comprehensive cancer centers in Camden and Voorhees, N.J., the partnership offers patients from across the region convenient access to advanced cancer services.

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