The group behind Matter is tackling healthcare next



The Connectivity Standards Alliance (CSA), the group behind Matter, announced today that it's putting together a working group to build a standards and certification program for health and wellness technology — basically, a specialized "Matter" that zeroes in on how Internet of Things devices can work together with wearables and other future forms of health tech.

Matter is a new smart home standard that allows IoT devices to communicate with each other regardless of which company made them. So long as you know a smart home device supports Matter, you know they'll play nicely together. The CSA's new Health and Wellness Working Group aims to apply the same concept to health and wellness tech. The ultimate goal is to help people age gracefully by enabling them to stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

There aren't a ton of concrete details just yet, as the working group is in the very early stages of development. That said, there are a lot of potential applications, like remote

patient monitoring, chronic condition management, and at-home care.

“A couple of the examples we like to give is mobility and fall risk,” says Aaron Goldmuntz, COO of the Center for Medical Interoperability and interim chair of the new working group. “When you look at the aging population, it’s a huge risk.”

For instance, there’s already a lot of existing tech that can detect when a person takes a tumble. It’s long been available in smartwatches, like the Apple Watch and Samsung Galaxy Watches, as well as in certain smart home devices. Ideally, you could have a scenario where smart home gadgets are able to monitor how well a person moves around their home. If someone falls, perhaps the smart home gadget could confirm a fall actually happened with a smartwatch — which then calls emergency services and alerts your emergency contacts. When paramedics arrive, a smart lock would then be able to let them in.

This is obviously just one potential scenario, and the CSA hasn’t committed to this exact use case. That said, you could see how enabling something like this could positively impact many lives. But there are several challenges and hurdles that need to be overcome.

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For instance, anything to do with healthcare and medicine must meet a much higher bar for accuracy and privacy. It’s also likely that regulatory bodies like the FDA — as well as its international counterparts — will need to provide some kind of oversight or guidance. And while many people care about data privacy, healthcare data is on another level. One of the biggest reasons why consumers may be reluctant to get a smartwatch, for instance, is to safeguard their health data.

“We recognize that there’s a higher bar for privacy and

regulatory considerations, which is why we created this as a separate working group," says Goldmuntz, explaining why this isn't the purview of the existing Matter group — even though this yet-to-be-named health tech standard will likely function in a similar way. Goldmuntz went on to explain the working group has a long-term view of the initiative but that there are short-term opportunities using existing products.

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Perhaps the biggest hurdle, however, is buy-in. A large contributing factor to Matter's success was that the right companies publicly stated they were on board with the initiative. Given the extra requirements for healthcare, the Health and Wellness Working Group will need that same kind of endorsement. The CSA declined to mention which companies are currently part of the working group, aside from the fact that "dozens of existing members" are part of the initiative.

"There also needs to be more healthcare players involved. We've started that outreach, and that's going to continue throughout the year," says Goldmuntz, referring to medical device manufacturers, aging-in-place services, healthcare providers, pharmacies, and government agencies.

"That's part of the reason we're making this announcement. That's going to be a requirement for success."

Correction, February 9th, 1:45PM ET: *A previous version of this article misstated Aaron Goldmuntz's title as CEO. He is COO. The headline has also been clarified to more clearly indicate it is the group behind Matter leading the effort.*

Correction, February 9th, 2:45 PM ET: *A previous version of this article misstated the Center for Medical Interoperability as the Medical Center for Interoperability. We regret the error.*

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