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M3 Health wants to create healthcare's "easy button" with Amazon's help

Dubbed Ping, the device is purchased by pharmaceutical and biotech companies and can be programmed for different applications depending on the user.

By [KEVIN TRUONG](#)

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While shopping on Amazon, it's hard to miss their dash devices, small thumb sized buttons that can be used to instantly order everything from toilet paper to dog food.

But what's the potential in taking this convenient consumer product and turning it to healthcare?

That's the idea behind Ping, an effort by Norristown, Pennsylvania-based [M3 Health](#) to apply Amazon's one-touch IoT technology to the life sciences space.

"When I go into clients and I start talking about the button they often think this is something for just e-commerce," M3 Health President Jennifer Valentine said in a phone interview. "We say 'think beyond that, because it's really about getting that one touch access and engagement to a whole variety of services beyond just purchasing your Tide Pods.'"

Valentine explained that the idea was born out of an interest in finding new ways for pharmaceutical sales reps to engage potential customers and differentiate their product offerings.



As an Amazon Web Services customer, the company contacted Amazon and applied to become the first healthcare partners for its IoT 1-Click platform.

Through conversations with physicians, patient advocates, marketing and stakeholders, Valentine said the company's perspective on the range of use cases for the device broadened.

Dubbed Ping, the device is purchased by pharmaceutical and biotech companies and are private labeled and programmed by M3 Health for different applications depending on the user. A major early customer for the company has been the oncology division of big pharma company Novartis.

Valentine said the button creates a physical presence with physicians and patients that adhere to regulations and can be used in multiple ways depending on how many times the device is clicked.

One use case is by physicians who can click the button once to order drug samples and double click to contact the pharmaceutical company for more information about medications.

Patients, especially those suffering from rare diseases or going through complex treatments, can be given the device when they start a therapy and use it to contact patient support services. The button can also be used to request refills and track medication adherence.

"There are patients who aren't necessarily going to be using an app, but would understand using a button to get in touch with somebody because they understand the concept of a device like Life Alert," Valentine said.

Ping can also highlight non-adherence with treatment plans and notify patients who need extra reminders or follow-up care from their doctor.

As the FDA increasingly seeks real-world evidence in their regulatory decisions, Valentine said Ping can be used as a data collection method and an indicator of the effectiveness of medication outside the clinical space.

M3 Health is also experimenting with integrations including Amazon's Lex Voice Assistant to create HIPAA-compliant voice applications through Ping.

"So that's another unique aspect where we've strung together multiple Amazon technologies to meet the changing needs of the market and how customers are really embracing this whole idea of the Amazon-ification of healthcare," Valentine said.