Bluetooth Smart to be the wireless technology most used in consumer medical devices by 2016

IMS Research (recently acquired by IHS Inc. (NYSE:IHS)) projects that by 2016, wireless-enabled consumer medical devices will use Bluetooth Smart technology the most. IMS Research forecasts that more than 4.7 million consumer medical devices containing Bluetooth Smart will be shipped in 2016 with more than 10.3 million shipped from 2012 to 2016.

According to IMS Research's recently published study "Wireless Opportunities in Health and Wellness Monitoring – 2012 Edition," more than 35 percent of wireless-enabled consumer medical devices shipped in 2016 will contain Bluetooth Smart. In 2012, five percent of consumer medical devices shipped will be able to make wireless connection; in 2016, it will be nine percent. IMS Research projects that ANT technology will also be available, with more than one-half million ANT-enabled consumer medical devices shipped in 2016.

IMS Research Senior Analyst Lisa Arrowsmith comments that, "one big reason for Bluetooth Smart being used in consumer medical devices is the projected increase in Bluetooth Smart Ready devices, most notably in cellular handsets. IMS Research believes that by 2015, all phones that would have been enabled with Bluetooth will be Bluetooth Smart Ready. These devices can give consumer medical devices additional functionality such as uploading medical information to apps and cloud-based services, as well as other features such as an advanced display. While ANT has also been adopted in some cellular handsets, it is not expected to reach the same levels of adoption as Bluetooth which will its uptake in some consumer medical devices."

Currently, most wireless-enabled consumer medical devices are using either Classic Bluetooth or proprietary wireless technology to communicate with specific devices such as dedicated health hubs or cellular handsets. For consumer medical devices using Classic Bluetooth, power consumption is always a key factor since most of these devices use batteries. Bluetooth Smart will offer the same levels of connectivity while also offering lower power consumption. However, even with this benefit, it is unlikely that medical OEMs will move over from Classic Bluetooth to Bluetooth Smart quickly because of the long design cycles that are commonplace, resulting from the strict regulations placed on medical devices.

"Although Bluetooth Smart can offer significant benefits in terms of power consumption and usability for consumer medical devices, OEMs are reluctant to move over to the technology with any great pace," Arrowsmith adds. "Most will continue to support Classic Bluetooth while releasing a Bluetooth Smart model in line with their existing design schedules. The cost of certification and regulatory approval is also another factor that will slow down the uptake of Bluetooth Smart in consumer medical devices as design cycles remain long, with 12-18 months on

average for a new medical device to be approved and available to consumers."

IMS Research's latest report "Wireless Opportunities in Health and Wellness Monitoring – 2012 Edition" assesses the uptake of 10 connectivity technologies in five consumer health-monitoring devices, five types of dedicated health hub, and five sports and fitness monitoring devices. Additional segmentation is also provided for the uptake of consumer health devices in three major regions (Americas, EMEA and Asia-Pacific). This report was published in March 2012.

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