

# A rescue app to get people to the right place at the right time

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A PulsePoint alert comes through Apple Watch. Photo: PulsePoint Foundation/Facebook

If someone falls down and stops breathing, an ambulance is sent for. Now there is also a smartphone app to alert regular people in the area to help.

These people can start life-saving efforts until the professionals get there.

The cell phone app is called PulsePoint. It is one of a number of apps that rescue workers, hospital workers and patients are using to respond to health emergencies and help save lives.

PulsePoint was made to aid victims who have suffered cardiac arrest.

## **Must Be Treated Quickly**

During cardiac arrest, the heart suddenly stops beating. Blood stops flowing to the brain and other organs. The victim is unconscious. If not treated within minutes, it usually results in death.

Sudden cardiac arrest is different from a heart attack. In a heart attack, the blood flow is blocked, but the heart usually doesn't stop beating and the person remains conscious.

PulsePoint has helped save lives in cities such as Cleveland, Ohio. In the last year, about 4,000 people there have downloaded the app. Thirty-six citizens there have responded to almost three dozen calls.

Some of the emergency apps that have been developed in recent years help people alert authorities if they're having a health crisis. Others make important information about a patient available to emergency responders. This information includes the name of the patient's doctor, emergency contacts, allergies, medications and medical condition.

A free app called 911HelpSMS informs a user of where he is located before he calls 911 in a medical emergency. It also instantly texts family members and gives them the person's GPS location.

## **Alerting A Lot Of People**

Another free app called EMNet finderER was developed for Massachusetts General Hospital. It allows people to quickly locate the nearest hospital in an emergency.

The PulsePoint app works through crowdsourcing. This means it reaches out to a large number of people in order to find someone nearby to help a patient who has suffered cardiac arrest.

Every year, more than 326,000 people who were not in a hospital experience cardiac arrest, according to the American Heart Association. Ninety percent of them die. But if correct CPR is given within three to five minutes, it can double or triple a victim's chance of surviving.

CPR involves pushing down on the chest of the victim to help their heart start beating again.

Here's how PulsePoint works. When a 911 call about a cardiac arrest in a public place comes in, PulsePoint app users are notified at the same time as first responders, like police, firefighters or paramedics. The users who are closest in distance are the ones who get the alert.

## **A Free App**

The PulsePoint app also directs citizen responders to the place where they can find the nearest defibrillator. A defibrillator is a device that sends an electric shock to the heart to try to restore its normal rhythm.

The app is free for users. Cities pay to use the app based on the size of their populations. So far, PulsePoint has been activated more than 4,000 times and more than 10,000 citizens have responded.

There are success stories of how PulsePoint has helped save lives.

One of these lives was a 56-year-old man from Oregon. He was in his car outside his gym when he experienced cardiac arrest.

Another was a 5-week-old baby with an enlarged kidney in Washington state. The baby went into cardiac arrest at a ballet shop where his sister was getting a tutu.

Shannon Smith works for PulsePoint. She said that the app gives people who have been trained in CPR the ability to find someone who is in distress and to know where to find a defibrillator. This helps increase the chances of the patient surviving.

## **A Big Help**

Jeff Helm runs emergency response for Sioux Falls, South Dakota. His department launched PulsePoint more than two years ago. When the program started, some people raised questions about keeping people's health information safe. They also wanted to know who would be responsible if something goes wrong.

But Helm said neither turned out to be a problem. Citizen responders who assist during a medical emergency are protected by Good Samaritan laws. Every state has these laws in place to protect people who help victims in public places.

More than 10,000 people have downloaded the app in Helm's community. He said that the app has gotten a lot of positive feedback.

"It keeps the public engaged," he said. "Everyone has a smartphone nowadays, and now we have an avenue to get them to the right place at the right time."

## Quiz

- 1 In the section "Must Be Treated Quickly," which paragraph BEST supports the section's title?
  
- 2 Which answer choice BEST explains the central idea of the article?
  - (A) New apps like PulsePoint are for doctors to use in hospitals.
  - (B) New apps like PulsePoint are helping regular people save lives.
  - (C) New apps like PulsePoint will not always be free for users.
  - (D) New apps like PulsePoint will soon be available everywhere.
  
- 3 According to the section "A Big Help," how did people's thoughts about the PulsePoint app change after it began to be used in their city?
  - (A) At first they were concerned, but then they found it was very useful.
  - (B) At first they were curious, but then they quickly lost interest.
  - (C) At first they were irritated, but then they were impressed.
  - (D) At first they were uninterested, but then they became excited.
  
- 4 Why are examples of people who have been helped by PulsePoint included in the article?
  - (A) to show that a couple of people have been saved
  - (B) to show that more people are using the app
  - (C) to show that smartphones are important to have
  - (D) to show that the app is working the way it should