

# Dallas Business Journal HEALTH CARE HEROES

## Dallas-Fort Worth Health Professional Awards 2007

{ Innovator Award }



JAKE DEAN

**ECONOMICS OF PREVENTION:** Patrick Dunn develops interactive programs to help patients improve and monitor their health — and cut health care costs.

## High-tech approach to health care

BY KAREN NIELSEN | CORRESPONDENT

After graduating from college with an exercise physiology degree, Patrick Dunn could have chosen to work with elite athletes. Instead, he decided to broaden his scope.

"I was interested in cardiovascular fitness, so I chose the health care route because it would make more of an impact on the world," said the vice president of corporate and direct consumer programs at MedicalEdge Healthcare Group in Dallas. "Cardiac rehabilitation can impact thousands of people as opposed to just one athlete."

For the past 20 years, Dunn has worked in cardiac rehab, exercise physiology, lipid and diabetes clinics, and cardiac program development. But in his spare time in the evenings and on weekends, he's finding innovative ways to marry his passion for prevention with technology.

His goal: to help patients better understand their conditions and allow them to actively participate and manage their care with physicians.

As the father of a 9-year-old



INNOVATOR AWARD  
2007

**PATRICK DUNN**

son who has Type 1 diabetes, Dunn recognizes the importance of making health care information understandable and having open communications with medical providers.

For the last eight years, he has worked with Dr. Scott Conard, president of medical affairs at MedicalEdge, on a lifestyle change program called "Game of Health."

Dunn moved the paper-based system to the Internet and set up an automated telephone outreach to allow patients to provide up-

dates on their status anytime and anywhere, Conard said.

Using a baseball analogy, the program runs patients at risk for obesity, high blood pressure or heart disease through the "bases" to learn more about prevention through videos and instructional information, helping them develop a plan and encouraging to share their knowledge with others.

"We're trying to make it fun," says Dunn, who also has an MBA.

"The whole idea is when a patient goes to see a doctor, the doctor has 15 minutes to tell them everything. This way the doctor can be connected to them by getting their information and reports on how well they are doing."

Since 2002, more than 1,000 patients from across the country have used the subscription-based program.

Another program, HealthCall, connects homebound and limited

mobility patients with congestive heart failure to their physicians via the telephone.

"Heart failure is the most common reason people are admitted to the hospital in the United States, but reimbursement for heart failure is very low," Dunn says. "Hospitals lose money and it's not good for patients either."

Patients weigh in at home each day, then call a toll-free number. A recorded voice asks a series of questions to determine if they're short of breath, whether they took their medicines that day or if there was any chest pain. Patients use a touch-tone pad to answer and the information is sent directly to the physician's office which can evaluate if immediate care is needed.

"Studies have shown that HealthCall reduces re-admission rates by 72%," said Dunn, who noted that three to four hospital systems are using the program.

"Patients like the fact that someone is monitoring them."

A third program, Cardioscore, is a way for companies to evaluate their employees' risk for heart disease and whether or not to use wellness and prevention measures as a means of reducing health costs.

So far, 20 organizations have used Cardioscore. One facility that spent \$20 million on health care for employees with heart disease determined it could save \$8 million in health claims over a five-year period with prevention programs.

"I've gotten very interested in the economics of prevention," Dunn said. "Our health care system is great on a case-by-case basis, but it's not very efficient and there's not enough emphasis on prevention."

Nielsen is a Plano-based freelance writer.