

Magellan Healthcare *eMpowered for Learning*  
webinar, Digital peer support: A whole-of-  
society approach to widespread availability of  
mental health and psychosocial support

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# About the presenter



Dr. Fortuna holds a doctorate in social welfare and a master's degree in social work. Dr. Fortuna is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry in the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College. Her primary research interest is service delivery strategies for older adults with serious mental illnesses and chronic health conditions. Dr. Fortuna is using community-engaged research methods to develop and implement the peer-supported mobile health program "PeerTECH." Dr. Fortuna was awarded a NIMH K01 award (K01MH117496), a NARSAD Young Investigator Grant from the Brain and Behavior Foundation, the Alvin R. Tarlov & John E. Ware Jr. Award in patient reported outcomes for her work, and the Gerontological Society of America's AGESW Faculty Achievement Award. Dr. Fortuna serves on the American Psychiatric Association's Smartphone App expert panel and served on the International Standards Advisory Committee to develop the first-ever international accreditation standards for behavioral health care for older adults. She is editor of JMIR: Journal of Participatory Medicine.

# Learning objectives



Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Develop an expertise in technologies used to offer digital peer support
2. Summarize how digital peer support can be integrated into systems of care
3. Explain the benefits of digital peer support to address mental health challenges and substance use challenges



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**Digital peer support:  
A whole-of-society approach to widespread  
availability of mental health and psychosocial  
support**

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# Agenda

1. History of digital peer support
2. Service delivery benefits of digital peer support for mental health and substance use challenges
3. Effectiveness of digital peer support for mental health and substance use challenges
4. Digital peer support technologies available
5. Challenges of digital peer support
6. Peer and academic partnership
7. Digital peer support certification
8. Peer support smartphone app database

# History of digital peer support

- 2005** First peer-reviewed published article on digital support for mental health challenges (United States)
- 2008** First peer-reviewed published article for substance use challenges (Norway; United States)
- 2012** Digital peer support for mental health challenges expands to Australia
- 2015** Digital peer support for substance use challenges expands to Australia
- 2016** Digital peer support expands to Europe (Italy & Denmark [Mental Health], Russia [Substance Use])
- 2017** Digital peer support expands to Asia (Japan)
- 2018** First older adult digital peer support program (PeerTECH)
- 2018** Digital peer support for substance use challenges expands to United Kingdom
- 2020** Rapid use of digital peer support globally

Fortuna, KL, et al. (2020). Digital Peer Support Mental Health Interventions for People With a Lived Experience of a Serious Mental Illness: Systematic Review. *JMIR: Mental Health*, 7 (3), e16460

# National survey of peer support specialists

***N=267*** from 38 states

## **Gender**

Female 73%; *n* = 195

## **Age range**

21-77 years (50.9 (SD = 12) years)

## **Race**

Caucasian 79.8% (*n* = 213)

## **Peer smartphone ownership**

94.8% (*n* = 253)



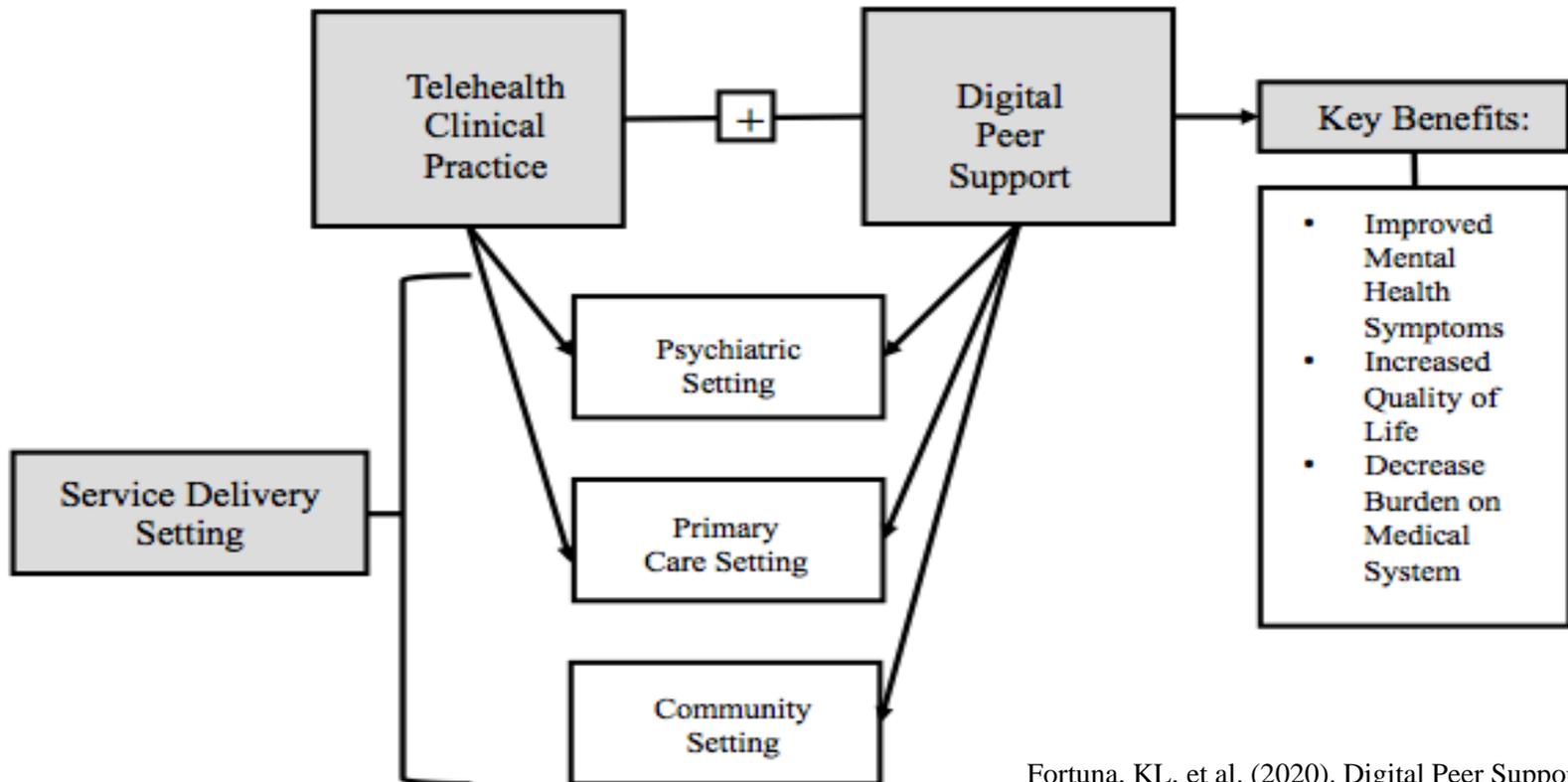
Fortuna, et al. (2018). Smartphone Ownership, Use, and Willingness to Use Smartphones to Provide Peer-Delivered Services: Results from a National Online Survey. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 89(4):947-956.

# Benefits of digital peer support

- No geographical limitations
- No time limitations
- Engages service users in digital mental health outside of clinical environments
- Expands the reach of peer support services
- Increases the impact of peer support without additional in-person sessions
- Can access hard-to-reach groups—rural residents, home-bound adults, older adults, people experiencing homelessness

# Benefits of digital peer support

## Augmentation of Tradition Clinical Practice through Digital Peer Support



Fortuna, KL, et al. (2020). Digital Peer Support Mental Health Interventions for People With a Lived Experience of a Serious Mental Illness: Systematic Review. *JMIR: Mental Health*, 7 (3), e16460

# Is digital peer support effective?

Digital peer support studies have established support for the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary effectiveness with regard to:

- Enhancing hope, quality of life, empowerment, social support and recovery
- Enhancing functioning
- Reducing symptoms
- Improving engagement in services

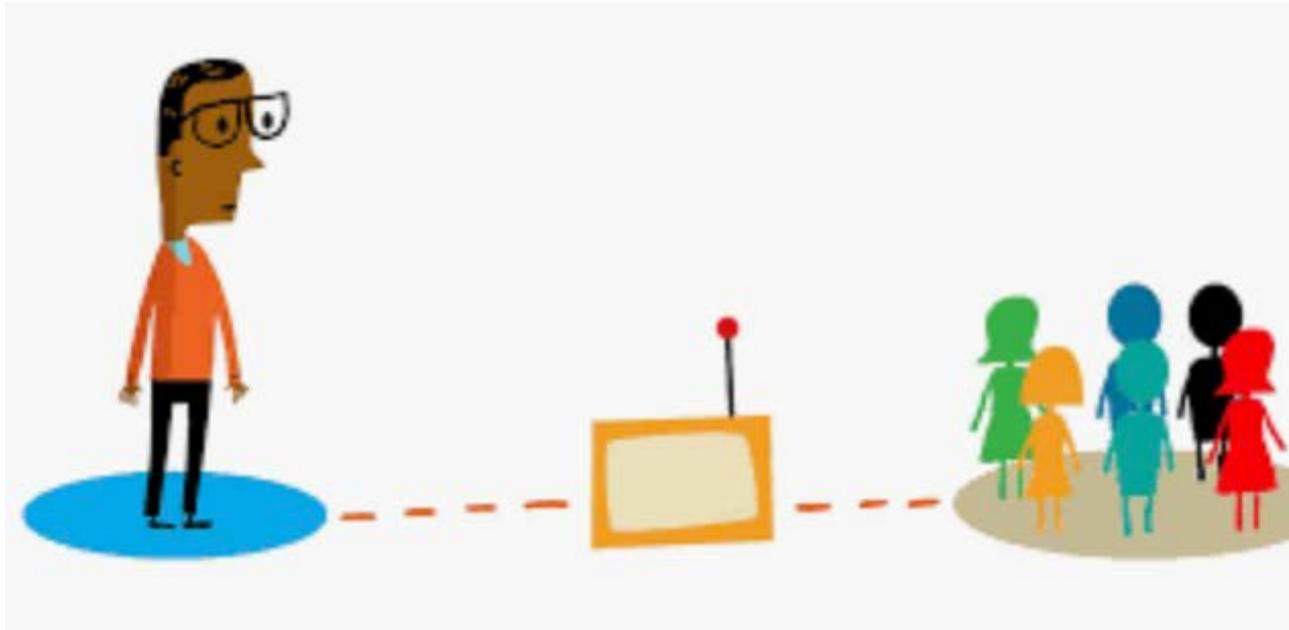
# Is digital peer support effective?

Digital peer support studies have established support for the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary effectiveness with regard to:

## Substance use challenges

- Reductions in risky substance use
- High levels of satisfaction and perceived benefit
- Engagement in services

# Technology is a means for human connection



Fortuna, KL, et al. (2020). Digital Peer Support Mental Health Interventions for People With a Lived Experience of a Serious Mental Illness: Systematic Review. *JMIR: Mental Health*, 7 (3), e16460

# Types of digital peer support

Peer-to-peer networks (i.e., informal groups like Facebook groups)

Peer-delivered programs supported with technology (i.e., trained peer support specialists that use smartphone apps or videoconferences to offer peer support)

Telephone or videos (i.e., synchronous technology and asynchronous technology)

# The role of peer support specialists in the digital era

## Enhancing Standards and Principles in Digital Mental Health With Recovery-Focused Guidelines for Mobile, Online, and Remote Monitoring Technologies

Karen L. Fortuna, Ph.D., M.S.W., Robert Walker, M.S., C.O.A.P.S., Daniel B. Fisher, M.D., Ph.D., George Mois, L.M.S.W., Stephanie Allan, M.A., Patricia E. Deegan, Ph.D.



Before the 1970s, the notion that people diagnosed as having a mental health condition could manage symptoms and return to work, school, and a full life in the community was not widespread. Through advocacy efforts by people with lived experience of a mental health condition, recovery-focused care has become a fundamental part of mental health service delivery across the globe (1) and is considered a complementary approach to traditional biomedical psychiatric care (2).

*Digital mental health interventions should embrace multiple dimensions of health.* People with lived experience of a mental health condition commonly present with other difficulties such as health conditions, substance use issues, and lack of social support—all of which affect overall health. Mental health recovery is not a singular task of monitoring and addressing psychiatric symptoms; rather, recovery involves addressing the complex interaction between an individual's biological, psychological, and sociocultural

# Challenges of digital peer support

Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-020-00138-7>

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## Certified Peer Specialists' Perspective of the Barriers and Facilitators to Mobile Health Engagement



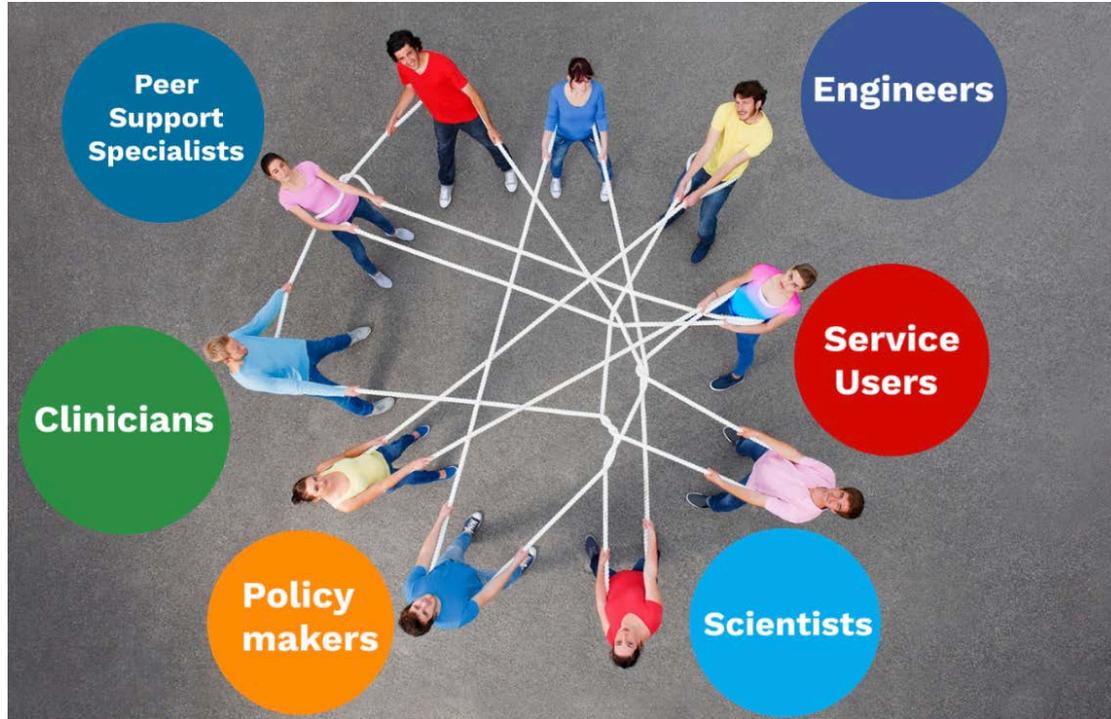
Karen L. Fortuna<sup>1</sup> · Anjana Muralidharan<sup>2</sup> · Carly M. Goldstein<sup>3</sup> · Maria Venegas<sup>4</sup> · Joseph E. Glass<sup>5</sup> · Jessica M. Brooks<sup>6</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examined certified peer specialists' perceptions of the barriers and facilitators to mobile health (mHealth) engagement. A total of 267 certified peer specialists from 38 states completed an online survey. Of this sample, 74 certified peer specialists completed open-ended questions. Data were analyzed from the 74 respondents who responded to open-ended questions. Certified peer specialists identified previously unidentified facilitators including the augmented use of certified peer specialists in combination with mHealth to improve engagement. One emerging theme identified was the belief that mHealth interventions may promote social isolation if not designed appropriately. Certified peer specialists appear to prefer using tablets instead of smartphones. Integrating certified peer specialists' perspectives of barriers and facilitators to mHealth engagement may promote initial and sustained mHealth engagement among consumers with serious mental illness. Future research using implementation science frameworks should examine these previously identified barriers and facilitators to mHealth engagement as correlates and/or predictors of engagement among service users.

# Peer-academic partnership



Fortuna, K et al. Application of Community-Engaged Research to inform the Development and Implementation of a Peer-delivered Mobile Health Intervention for Adults with Serious Mental Illness. *JMIR: Journal of Participatory Medicine* 2019;11(1):e12380

Partnership is based on collaboration, engagement, shared decision-making, principles of reciprocal relationships, co-learning, partnership, trust, transparency and honesty

## Planning the study

- Intervention development
- Developing research question
- Determining outcomes
- Implementation considerations

## Conducting the study

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Intervention delivery

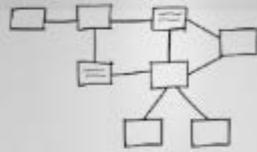
## Disseminating results

- Social media, blogs, newsletters
- Presentations at local and national organization, provider and academic conferences

# Selecting peer support apps

## Selecting Peer Support Apps

**Step #1:** Our co-production team searches the App Store and Google Play weekly for “Peer Support”.



**Step #2:** Next, we screen for peer support specialists’ digital technology standards, such as 508 compliance, recovery language and principles, features to allow for communication between peers, inclusion peer-supported evidence-based practices, peer developed or co-produced with allies.



**Step #3:** Peer support apps that meet peer support specialists’ digital technology standards are included into our database.



**Step #4:** Peer support specialists’ and service users’ assess the value or quality of peer support apps based on their personal experience with the app.

# Digital Peer Support Certification

- What is Digital Peer Support?
- Digital Communication Skills
- Technology Literacy and Usage Skills
- Digital Peer Support Technologies
- Organizational Policies and Ethical Issues
  - Privacy and Confidentiality
  - Monitoring Digital Peer Support
  - How to Address A Digital Crisis
- How to Hire, Train, and Supervise Digital Peer Support Specialists

The Digital Peer Support Certification has been found to be an effective knowledge translation training that has shown to increase peer support specialists' knowledge, confidence and capacity to use digital peer support in practice.

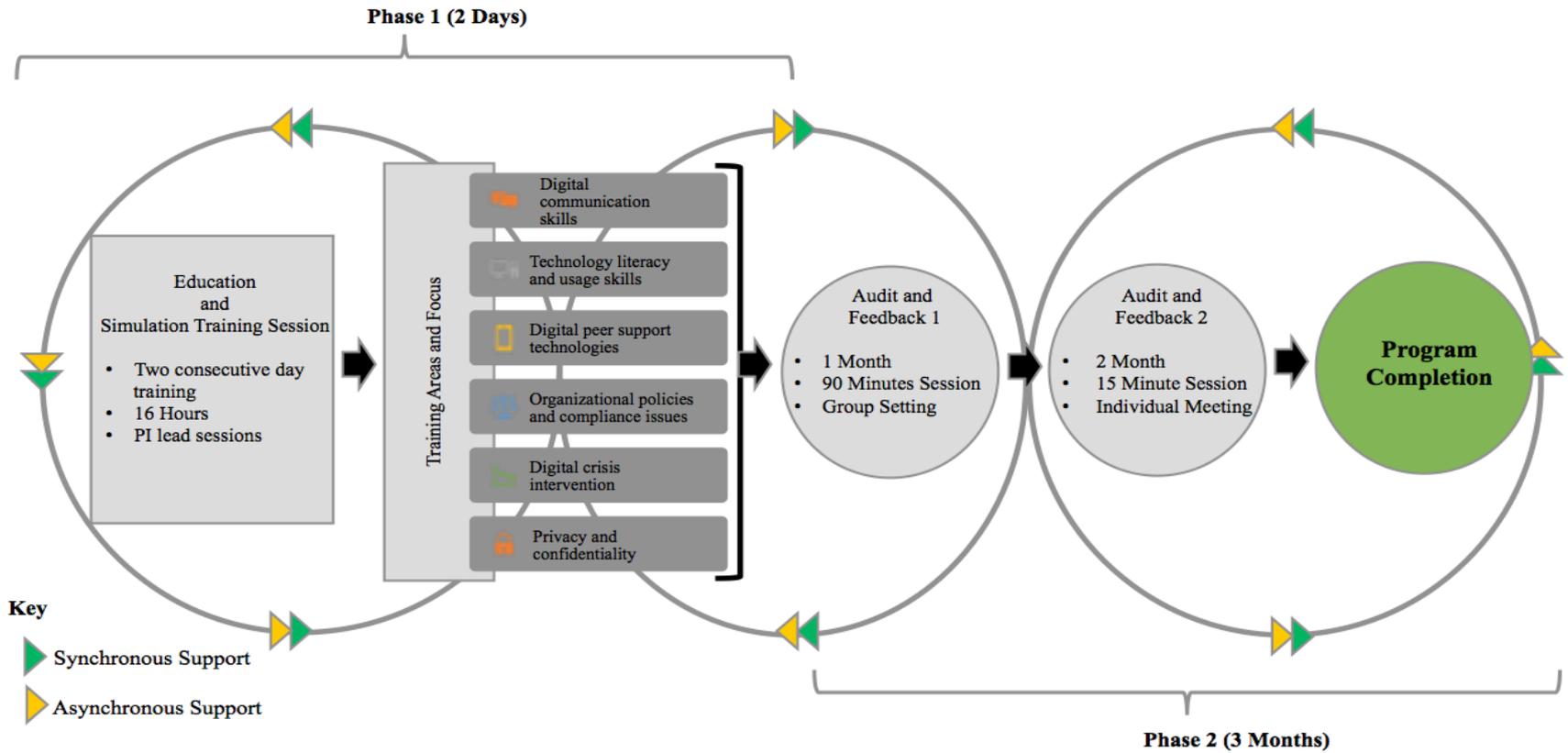
Fortuna, K et al. Strategies to Impact Peer Support Specialists' Capacity to Use Digital Peer Support Technology. (under review).

# 1,550 peer support specialists trained



<http://digitalpeersupport.org/certification/>

Figure 1. Digital Peer Support Certification Process



Fortuna, K et al. Strategies to Impact Peer Support Specialists' Capacity to Use Digital Peer Support Technology. (under review).

# Iterative intervention co-design



[Psychiatric Quarterly](#)

June 2018, Volume 89, [Issue 2](#), pp 293–305 | [Cite as](#)

## Feasibility, Acceptability, and Preliminary Effectiveness of a Peer-Delivered and Technology Supported Self-Management Intervention for Older Adults with Serious Mental Illness

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### Smartphone app may help older adults manage serious mental illness and chronic health conditions

*New study in The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry indicates that middle-aged and older adults have the potential to use tailored smartphone interventions to self-manage their illness*

Share this:       

Philadelphia, PA, August 15, 2017

The use of new technologies in geriatric psychiatry shows promise for advancing personalized medicine and improving patient care. A new [study](#) in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* describes the successful adaptation of an integrated medical and psychiatric self-management intervention to a smartphone application for middle-aged and older adults with serious mental illness.



#### Innovative Apps Connect Elderly to Psychiatric Care

Smartphone technology offers wide-ranging opportunities for delivering essential interventions directly to patients, making treatment more efficient and, in some cases, more effective.

MEDSCAPE.COM

<http://digitalpeersupport.org/app-development/>

# Thank You!

## **Contact information:**

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# Questions and discussion

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