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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2017

Wellpepper Wins $125K Grand Prize in Alexa Diabetes Challenge

Today, the Challenge judges awarded Wellpepper the $125,000 grand prize in the Alexa Diabetes Challenge. Wellpepper is the team behind Sugarpod, a concept for a multimodal diabetes care plan solution using voice interactions.

The multi-stage Challenge is sponsored by Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, New Jersey, U.S.A., supported by Amazon Web Services (AWS), and powered by Luminary Labs. In April, the competition launched with an open call for concepts that demonstrate the future potential of voice technologies and supporting Amazon Web Services to improve the experience of those who have been newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

"Technology advances are creating digital health opportunities to improve support for people managing life with a chronic disease," said Tony Alvarez, president, Primary Care Business Line and Customer Strategy at Merck & Co., Inc. "One purpose of the Alexa Diabetes Challenge was to identify new ways to use the technology already present in a patient's daily routine. The winner of the Challenge did just that."

Sugarpod is a concept for an interactive diabetes care plan solution that provides tailored tasks based on patient preferences. It delivers patient experiences via SMS, email, web, and a native mobile application – and one day, through voice interfaces as well. Since much of diabetes management occurs in the home, the Wellpepper team recognized that integrating voice was the natural next step to make the platform more convenient where patients are using it most. During the Challenge, Wellpepper also prototyped an Alexa-enabled scale and foot scanner that alerts patients about potential foot problems, a common diabetes complication.

"Sugarpod helps newly diagnosed people with type 2 diabetes integrate new information and routines into the fabric of their daily lives to self-manage, connect to care, and avoid complications. The Challenge showed us the appeal of voice solutions for patients and clinical value of early detection with home-based solutions," said Anne Weiler, co-founder and CEO of Wellpepper.

The Challenge received 96 submissions from a variety of innovators, including research institutions, software companies, startups, and healthcare providers. The panel of judges, independent from Merck, narrowed the field down to Wellpepper and four other finalists, who each received $25,000 and $10,000 in AWS promotional credits and advanced to the Virtual Accelerator. During this phase of the competition, the finalists received expert mentorship as they iterated their solutions in preparation for Demo Day. At Demo Day on September 25, 2017, the five finalists presented their solutions to the judges and a live audience of industry leaders at the AWS Pop-up Loft in New York to compete for the grand prize.

"The Alexa Diabetes Challenge has been a great experiment to re-think what a consumer, patient, and caregiver experience could be like and how voice can become a frictionless interface for these interactions. We can imagine a future where technological innovations, like those provided by Amazon and AWS, are supporting those who need them most," said Oxana Pickeral, Global Segment Leader in Healthcare and Life Sciences at Amazon Web Services.

Learn more at alexadiabeteschallenge.com and follow the Challenge at @ADchallenge.

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