Emma Ward and Sydney White Tear

It's an EMERGENCY!

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Emergency Services are constantly establishing new systems of efficiency and faster attendance to those in need. These teams are trained to attack any situation hurled at them, so why is there a problem? They are efficient, they are fast, they are qualified. They don't know is each person's individual details!

Are you allergic to a specific medication, have you recently had surgery, do you have a chronic disease, have you got a heart condition, are you currently being treated for illness, are you mentally or physically disabled, do you have diabetes, are you single or should they notify a partner, do you have family that can be contacted?

The list is literally endless.

In less severe cases, individuals are easily able to answer simple questions when asked. Though, what happens when an individual is badly injured or unconscious, incredibly shocked or traumatised or simply is unsure of information about themselves. These could be the answer to a life or death question.

The Apple iPhone was first developed and released in early 2007, where the normalisation of using a mobile phone revolutionised the speed at which emergency services could respond to a scene. Through the further development of applications and features on each new iPhone, users have had better accessibility to aid and assistance when they require it. The number of lives saved due to speedier mobile communication is enormous.

In late 2017, Apple validated this by establishing a new emergency call feature embedded within IOS update 10.2, where users are able to press the power button of the iPhone rapidly 5 times instead of manually unlocking their phone and dialling the number. A screen appears and provides the options to view medical ID or call the emergency service number that aligns with your location - in Australia this is 000. This element makes contacting help more discreet which is critical in certain situations – domestic violence or sexual assault, for instance.

However, speed does not override the power of knowledge.

So many emergency scene attendants are lacking tiny pieces of personal information that can aid them do their job with maximum efficiency.

Apple have evidently analysed their application development and recognised the demand for physical medical documents to meet the standards of modern technology – where the physical paper form of anything and everything has been digitised. They have met this request through embedding the ability to input personal medical ID into the Apple Health app.

Information you can set up includes: your name, date of birth, known medical conditions, medical notes, allergies and reactions, medications, blood type, whether or not you are an organ donor, your weight and your height as well as emergency contacts. This means that you or the emergency attendants can activate this feature and briefly understand the best way

to treat you and the situation – therefore providing you personalised care with maximum efficiency.

But who uses the features? In 2015, JMIR Mhealth Uhealth conducted a cross sectional survey across the United States, where they found only 53.28% (934/1604) of mobile phone consumers used health based applications. With many of these participants not having an Apple mobile, the accessibility to features is diminished and the use rate of Apple Health lowers. This was validated through simply asking peers, family and friends, as not many people are aware of emergency call and medical ID features. If nobody knows about a feature, does it really exist?

This idea further poses the question of whether the emergency responders themselves are aware of or are trained to utilise these features in their power. For users, we sure would hope they are but this doesn't provide reason to disregard your own responsibility – update to IOS 10.2 and get using!


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Calling emergency services

1. Rapidly press the side (or top) button five times. The Emergency SOS slider will appear. (In India, you only need to press the button three times, then your iPhone automatically calls emergency services.)
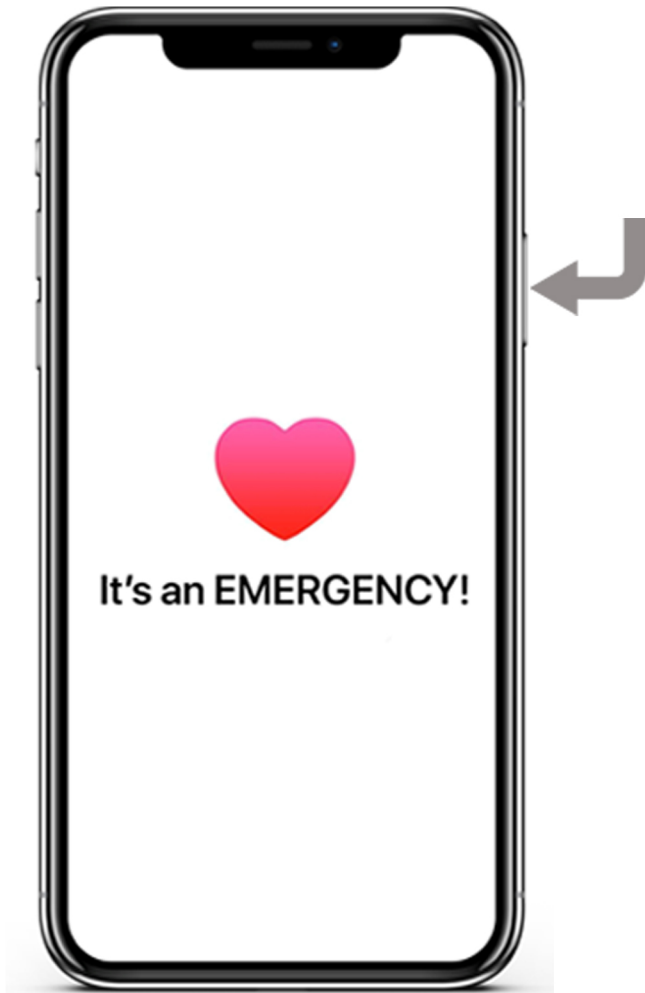
2. Drag the Emergency SOS slider to call emergency services.