Alexa, Meet Tara: GHUCCTS collaboration to provide personalized, voice-activated wellness assistants for patients with heart failure.

MARCH 14, 2019 - What started as a project to enhance Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa has evolved into an expanded partnership with ObEN Inc., an artificial intelligence (AI) company that is creating Personal AI 3D avatars. Together, the Georgetown-Howard Universities Center for Clinical and Translational Studies (GHUCCTS), MedStar Health Research Institute (MHRI), and ObEN will introduce the world to Tara, an intelligent 3D healthcare assistant avatar aiming to improve health and quality of life for in-home, independent, and assisted-living patients with heart failure.

The original project, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) through the GHUCCTS Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS), aimed to design a customized and interactive heart failure skill kit within Alexa, giving patients the opportunity to connect with family and healthcare providers while monitoring their heart health at home. The GHUCCTS team, led by Nawar Shara, PhD, Director of the Department of Biostatistics and Biomedical Informatics at MHRI and Associate Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University, successfully coded the interactive skill kit into Alexa, trained study coordinators to help patients pair their Alexa accounts, and successfully tested the skill kit with over 90% of their target enrollment in less than two months.

This concept will now be taken to the next level in collaboration with ObEN via the creation of the avatar Tara to give a name, a face, and a voice to this innovative at-home heart health monitoring system. Read more about Tara on GlobeNewswire.

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