UC San Diego Medical Student on Forefront of "Apps" Business

"Necessity is the Mother of Invention" goes high-tech

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Being a full-time, third-year medical student is tough enough but Michael "Fuj" Fujinaka is also busy helping his fellow students learn. He answered his own questions about identifying heart murmurs by inventing a practical, high-tech learning tool.

"All doctors use stethoscopes and all medical students purchase them upon entering med school," explained Fujinaka. "So I thought there might be a high demand for a program that teaches students how to recognize heart murmurs."

Fujinaka created an application ("app") for the iPhone called iMurmur. The name refers to a set of heart problems that give off a certain sound. That sound - or murmur- can be heard by a stethoscope. Now, with Fujinaka's app, students and health practitioners can practice diagnosing heart murmurs using a set of earphones and an iPhone. Through a series of quizzes focusing on the most common heart problems, iMurmur teaches its users to recognize and identify what is wrong with the heart.

Fujinaka designed how the app should look and act then partnered with a programmer who turned that vision into a program for the iPhone and iPod Touch. Phalanx Development released the application in July and in just three days, iMurmur hit the #2 slot of most popular apps in the medical category and it remains in the top five.

"iMurmur has been purchased in more than 35 countries around the world and has received excellent reviews and feedback," said Fujinaka.

Most of the online reviews gave iMurmur five out of five stars. One professor wrote "This program, along with online multimedia, is a good learning tool during pre-clinical years. This program is very well done and I'll be encouraging my students to use it. Hopefully they'll listen."

Most students loved it, too. "The diagrams are very well done and help to reinforce learning the murmurs," commented one. "The details section is really to the point and hits the main features of the murmurs."

The application sells for $2.99. Check it out for yourself with a visit to: http://www.phalanxdev.com/apps/iphone/imurmur/index.html

As for Fujinaka's entrepreneurial experience, he says "This whole process has been really amazing. It was exciting to bring this app to the market and sell it around the world. Knowing that people really enjoy it makes me feel good."

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