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July 12-13 USC-Sponsored Hackathon Aims to Help Those With Developmental Disabilities Gain A Stronger "Voice" In Personal Healthcare Using AI-Driven Assistants

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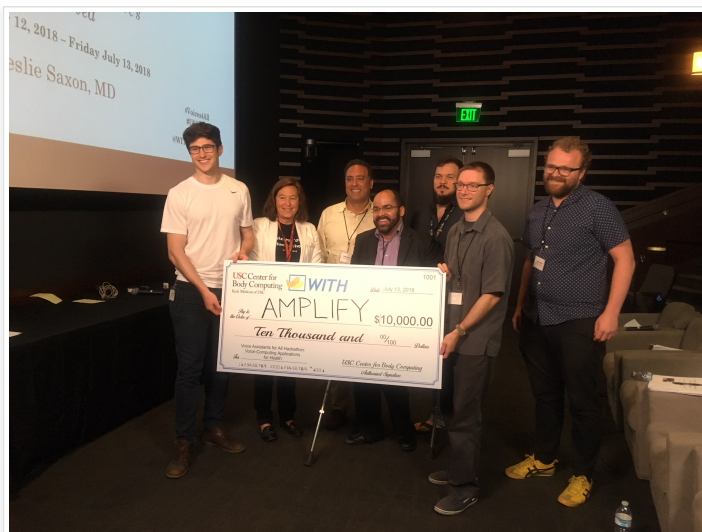
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By **Eraina Davis**, July 9, 2018 at 2:29 pm



Healthcare is a major topic of discussion for many American families. With new implementations of healthcare legislation and changes in benefits for many underrepresented and vulnerable populations, advocacy is an important part of the process. As the mother of a teen daughter with developmental delays and epilepsy, one of my major concerns as she enters adulthood is her ability to communicate her health needs on a daily basis.

Fortunately, there are organizations actively involved in improving healthcare for people like her. The [USC Center for Body Computing \(CBC\)](#), at the Keck School Medicine of USC is hoping to solve unmet healthcare needs using home-based digital assistants. The CBC is a digital health research and innovation center that is creating technology-driven healthcare solutions for a modern age. ne of the nation's first university-based centers to focus on digital health solutions, the CBC was founded in 2006 at the Keck School of Medicine of USC by Leslie Saxon, MD, a USC-



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Eraina Davis

Eraina Davis is a writer and entrepreneur. She has written for "Healthy Living" magazine as well as several academic publications. She opened one of the first pop-up shops in downtown New Haven, Connecticut called The Good Life, where she gave advice to entrepreneurs. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, an M.Ed in Education and an MAR in Religion from Yale.

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trained cardiologist and internationally renowned digital health expert.

According to Saxon, who is the executive director of the CBC and a professor of medicine at the Keck School, "This is an opportunity to find technology-based solutions that can empower people who are underserved by mainstream healthcare. Emerging artificial intelligence voice assistant like Google Home and Amazon Echo might help us bridge that gap."

On July 12-13, teams of innovators will gather for the CBC's 2018 "Voice Assistants for All" hackathon. These teams will be meeting the challenge of creating solutions that will enable people with developmental disabilities as well as seniors and veterans to have more control over their healthcare. It is an overnight event concluding with team presentations and expert judges in the fields of computer science, creative arts, medicine, science, and engineering. The winning team will receive \$10,000 and an opportunity to collaborate with the CBC and industry leaders to bring their idea to life. *

This year's hackathon, co-hosted with the [WITH Foundation](#), will require participants to use voice assistants to foster deeper connections, encourage informed health care decision-making and identify gaps in care. The intent is to encourage solutions that make sure patients are involved in decision-making regarding their care and that their expectations for their health care and health care needs are known and met.

According to Ryan Easterly, executive director of the WITH Foundation, "WITH is excited about our partnership with the USC Center for Body Computing. We look forward to seeing the ways that participants engage the use of voice assistants as an effective healthcare tool."

Voice assistants can serve as an effective healthcare tool by providing medical information, helping with schedules and keeping records of interactions, Saxon explains.

"Digital technology is especially helpful, because much of healthcare still exists outside of a doctor's visit. It provides an opportunity to share tools and information directly to people within their own homes," she says. "Research has also shown that virtual humans can increase the willingness of people to disclose information by decreasing fears of evaluation and judgment."

I am hopeful that the hackathon will produce much-needed improvements in healthcare for families like ours. The hackathon will take place at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies in Playa Vista, CA. For more information about the hackathon, visit uscbodycomputing.org/va-hackathon.

**It was later announced that Amplify, one of the 5 competing teams, won the competition. Amplify aims to improve speech outcomes for children with cerebral palsy (CP) by leveraging voice assistant technology to delivery speech therapy treatment through an interactive storytelling experience.*

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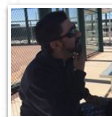
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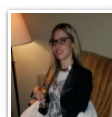
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