

Epi Info™ 7

Opening credits: Song: Lipstick; Album: Mad Men Original TV Soundtrack; Artist: David Carbonara; Label: Manhattan Records.

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Brad Myers] Hi, I'm Brad Myers, and this is “CDC Elevator Chat,” the program where *we* ask the questions *you* would if ever found yourself on an elevator with a CDC scientist.

With me today is Asad Islam; Asad leads the Epi Info™ team at CDC.

Launched in 1984, Epi Info™ was one of the first computer-based tools for public health surveillance. In 2012, the team is adding new tools, including tablet and smartphone capabilities to the version 7 platform. Welcome, Asad; thanks for joining us.

[Asad Islam] Thanks for the invitation.

[Brad Myers] So, what's your background and how did you get involved with Epi Info™?

[Asad Islam] I'm a computer scientist and in the private sector, I was helping small start-up companies develop their core technology products quickly and beat their competitors to the market. At CDC, I was asked to do something similar – take a very small team and a negligible budget and deliver an innovative product before people lose interest. We did that last year when we delivered Epi Info™ 7 and we're about to do it again as we add web based, tablet, and smartphone capabilities.

[Brad Myers] A lot of people don't even know Epi Info™ exists, so what function does it serve in public health?

[Asad Islam] For the uninitiated... Epi Info™ lets you very quickly, in a cost-effective manner, collect and analyze any type of epidemiologic data. This comes in very handy during disease outbreak investigations or disaster response when you do need to quickly collect data, but more importantly, quickly figure out what that data is telling you. By the way, it's *free*.

[Brad Myers] Oh, I get it... we're from the government and we're here to help you. So, let's talk about Epi Info™. A senior scientist I know said, “What makes Epi Info™ great is that it's the only program that functions like an epidemiologist thinks.”

[Asad Islam] I agree. The intention is to make it really intuitive for epidemiologists. The training epis get in school syncs up well with the layout and functionality of the program. Epi Info™ forms look just like paper based forms. The line lists are in the exact format that epis like. Epi Info's™ analytic dashboard literally looks and behaves like a whiteboard that epis would gather around to draw out their relative risk charts. It's like kids and iPads, the user just intuitively know where to go.

[Brad Myers] So, where do we go from here?

[Asad Islam] Well, we have the first Epi Info™ Android app. With this app, you literally have Epi Info™ in the palm of your hands as you are doing field data collection and analysis. You get to do real distributed data collection, even if some natural disaster has disrupted Internet connectivity. Then, once you're at a hotspot, you can sync up your data with your peers.

[Brad Myers] Why are these updates so important? What's going to be the impact of them?

[Asad Islam] Epi Info™ brings down the cost, time, and IT burden for public health practice. Really, if our product helps a health department get to the source of an outbreak one hour sooner, before one more person becomes sick, I think we've made a big difference.

[Brad Myers] With the new version, what's been the hardest thing to accomplish and what are you most proud of?

[Asad Islam] I'm proud that we got it done. For this hand held app, we really just had two programmers. As corny as it sounds, I'm proud to show that we can accomplish big things with little resources. Of course, we don't want to make a habit of this, so if you have money out there, please send us some!

[Brad Myers] Okay, addresses to follow. Finally, we have two questions we ask all of our passengers. First, why did you get into public health?

[Asad Islam] It definitely beats developing software to find the closest restaurant! At CDC, I feel like I'm contributing to something that matters. *And*, I'm validated every time someone sends an anecdote about how they're using Epi Info™.

[Brad Myers] Second, tell us something you'll be talking about over lunch with your CDC colleagues?

[Asad Islam] I try not to talk shop during lunch. I'll probably be talking about Chelsea's shocking defeat of Barcelona at the Champion's League semis.

[Brad Myers] You and two million FC Milan fans. Got time for a shameless plug?

[Asad Islam] Sure. Go to www.cdc.gov/epiinfo and download Epi Info™ today.

[Brad Myers] Asad Islam, lead for Epi Info™, thanks for riding with us.

If you want to find out more about Epi Info™, or other stuff from CDC to impress at your next backyard barbeque, go to www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

See you next time.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

End credits music: Song: She Blinded me With Science; Artist: UCLA Marching Band; Originally recorded by Howard Jones; Album: The Golden Age of Wireless; Label: Capitol Records.