

# Useful and controversial apps and services

These apps and web services are not specifically ophthalmic but hopefully of interest.

## Office Lens

Delegates take pictures of presentation slides at conferences quite frequently. If this is something you do, have a look at the 'Office Lens' app. This Microsoft application functions as second camera app for your smartphone. Once loaded, point your camera at the presentation screen or whiteboard. Ensure 'Whiteboard' is selected from the choice at the bottom of the screen. The app will then try to identify from board or screen from the background. Once highlighted with a rectangle, press the capture button. The app will then trim and enhance the image. If you are sat at an angle from the screen, the image will be straightened. The resulting image can then be saved or shared as needed. The app is freely available from the app stores of iOS, Android and Windows phones.

## Curve card (imaginecurve.com)

Curve provide a service to reduce the number of banking cards you need to carry to one (Figure 1). When you sign up the company will send you a Curve Mastercard. The next step is to enroll all your existing bank cards into the iOS or Android app. The Curve card will then behave like any of your enrolled cards. The specific one can be chosen quickly in the app. If you make a purchase on the Curve card you have two weeks to move the purchase to any of your other enrolled cards free of charge. This 'Go Back In Time' feature is very handy, so you do not have to carry your phone and check the selected card before each purchase. I have been using the card and companion app since January 2018 and it has been reliable and very useful. Curve are not a bank, they just provide a routing service between your cards.

One added bonus is that the app provides a notification every time it is used for a purchase.

## WeTransfer App

I have written about wetransfer.com in the past, as it is my go to website to share large files with others. I still use and recommend the service. More recently, iOS and Android apps have been made available. These are a nice addition to an already useful service.



Figure 1: Curve Card © Curve 1 LTD.

## Facebook Lite

Simply a slimmed down version on the traditional Facebook app. The battery drain from this version is far less than the full app.

## WhatsApp Web (web.whatsapp.com)

As long as you have WhatsApp installed and connected on your phone, this website allows you to read and reply from a computer. It is a handy facility to have and complements the app well.

## Just Watch

More of us than ever before are streaming TV and films. This app will quickly tell you where a programme can be streamed as part of a subscription, rented or bought online. The service can be configured to only show results from the services you subscribe to (e.g. Netflix, Disney Life and Amazon Prime Video).

## Babylon

This app and the associated business (Babylon Health) are undoubtedly one to watch. For those unfamiliar with Babylon Health, here is a quick catch-up. This British company was founded in 2013 by the entrepreneur Ali Parsa. It is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as a healthcare provider. They offer a GP service by subscription or one-off payments. What is most interesting (and controversial) is that the initial triage consultation is done via a conversation with a computer. Whether this computer can accurately be called an artificial intelligence (AI) is

strongly debated. At present this initial triage is done in the app but is being also deployed as a service on the Amazon Alexa platform. Depending on the information provided at the triage stage a video conference is sometimes then organised with an actual GP. Search for 'Babylon Alexa demo' on YouTube to see a little of the decision trees that the 'AI' uses to triage. The technology and software utilised are quite impressive and improving all the time. Samsung are even including the facility to use Babylon in their health suite on new UK smartphones. If reviews are a good measure of satisfaction with the service, Babylon is doing well. On the Android and iOS app stores the service is highly rated with many satisfied customers. Many contrast the fast service to that of getting a typical GP appointment in the NHS.

Most of the controversy around the service comes from the medical profession. The company has a quite turbulent relationship with the Royal College of GPs. Some in the profession have highlighted potentially dangerous triage decisions made by the service. Others accuse Babylon of cherry-picking patients that are easy to treat.

Babylon is also expanding internationally and appear to be on a firmly upward trajectory. Like or loathe, it seems inevitable that this type of service will form a prominent part of future healthcare.

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