

Podcast Name: *ACM ByteCast*

Episode: Shwetak Patel

The *ACM ByteCast* podcast is a series from the Association for Computing Machinery, which is the world's largest education and scientific computing society. The podcast features conversations with researchers, practitioners, and innovators at the intersection of computing research and practice about their experiences, lessons learned, and visions for the future of computing. In this episode, host Jessica Bell interviews Shwetak Patel. Shwetak is a professor of computer science at the University of Washington, and he is the Director of Health Technologies at Google. As a fun fact, he shares that he was a trained electrician and plumber while in graduate school.

Moving forward in the conversation, Jessica asks about how Shwetak developed an interest in computer science and ended up in his particular course of graduate study. Shwetak was more of a computer engineer at first, but had an interest in both hardware and software that narrowed to computing while he was in grad school. His graduate research was influenced by his undergraduate exposure to smart house technology (and specifically the [Aware Home](#)), which also overlapped with his interest in construction. Shwetak found himself interested in building sensors and in applying his study in a socially meaningful way. He worked in monitoring energy in a home in order to enable energy-saving apps, and also in using machine learning to narrow to one sensor for use in a home.

Jessica further wonders why Shwetak got into academia rather than another field, and he explains that he found intellectual freedom in academia. The field offered flexibility as a starting point to innovate, and then the freedom to decide when to scale out innovations. Shwetak himself is very impact-driven, and he is aware of the need for computing to look beyond itself in order to have the strongest possible societal impact. The field needs - among other things - interdisciplinary collaboration if it is to keep up with a fast-paced society, and it can accomplish more in tandem with others. Shwetak details his efforts to expand diversity in the field, the healthcare work he is doing now in remote patient monitoring, and the global implications of his work. As the conversation moves toward a conclusion, Jessica asks for Shwetak's advice to people seeking to enter his field, and Shwetak considers what is concerning and what is exciting about the future of computing.

Links:

Learn more about [Shwetak Patel](#).

Learn more about the Association for Computing Machinery's Practitioner Board at [acm.org](#).

Learn more about the ACM ByteCast at [learning.acm.org/bytecast](#).