Transforming patient care *in the digital age*

Digital technology a disruptive solution to global healthcare challenges

Like most other industries, healthcare is in the midst of a digital transformation. The latest digital technologies are changing the way we deliver healthcare and how we manage population health, improving care while at the same time reducing costs.

This panel discussion centered on how an integrated digital healthcare, or connected care, system would help cope with the urgent health challenges we face and how such a system could come to fruition in Singapore.

Mr Fernando Erazo, Head of Healthcare Informatics Solutions and Services, Philips ASEAN Pacific kick-started the session by highlighting why we need connected care, "In 20 years, there will be twice as many 65-year olds and we want to keep them productive, away from the hospital and contributing to society.

> " *We want to see connected care bringing professional care outside the four walls of a hospital.* "
> *Mr Erazo*

We recognize that they are consuming healthcare disproportionately, and they do so especially when they are in front of doctors in hospitals and specialist clinics. We want to see connected care bringing professional care outside the four walls of a hospital."

Meeting challenges like a rapidly ageing population begs the redefinition of healthcare; from a service that provides mere clinical services to a holistic program that enables patients to live healthy yet independent lives. "Today, the healthcare institutions and healthcare providers are responsible for your healthcare. Tomorrow, maybe, the population will be responsible," said Dr Daniel Fung, Chairman Medical Board, Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Singapore.

More than just wearables

To alleviate the strain on our already limited healthcare resources, we need to empower people to manage their health within their home, where they spend most time in. "People spend on average 15 minutes, four times a year in front of a professional health provider. With the 364 days and 23 hours that remain, they are in their homes. We want to ensure that consumers are playing an active role in their own health," said Mr Erazo.

Philips has partnered Changi General Hospital and the Eastern Health Alliance to pilot a telehealth program to monitor heart failure patients remotely and help them adhere to treatment plans. This helps prevent patient condition deterioration and reduce the risk of hospitalization through early interventions. Initial results suggest that it helps lower readmission rates by encouraging self-monitoring and efficient engagement with care providers.

"With connected care, we have an option to prevent illnesses. An opportunity to predict problems well before they start, and personalize it so each one of us can have a better understanding – it starts with education," added Dr Fung.

"Research has shown that when patients have access to data, they are more involved in their own healthcare that leads to lower costs, higher levels of satisfaction and better patient outcomes", highlighted Dr Sharon Tan, Academic Co-Director, Centre for Health Informatics, NUS.

> *Digital technology empowers patients to play a more active role in their health management.*

The Future of Connected Care

The panelists agreed that data sharing and privacy is a major stumbling block in the adoption of connected care. "We need to get the right data to the right person at the right time," said Associate Professor James Yip, Chief Medical Information Officer, National University Health System. According to the Philips Future Health Index, even though more than half (57%) of patients own or use a connected care device to monitor various health indicators, only one third of these patients (33%) have shared this information with their doctor.

Mr Erazo opined that because healthcare is one of the most regulated sectors, data privacy and security would not be an issue if we have the right frameworks and infrastructure in place, much like the banking industry.

As digital devices become more ubiquitous, and as a new, digitally native generation of healthcare professionals and patients emerge, there is a growing opportunity for healthcare providers to incorporate digital technology into the everyday delivery of care.

It is time that we not just acknowledge, but embrace connected care as the future of our healthcare landscape to better support patients within their home. "Technology is just an enabler, and can never been seen as the solution. It is about the integration of clinical counterparts, as well as getting patients more involved in their own care and motivated enough to have that daily engagement that will make a difference," Mr Erazo added.
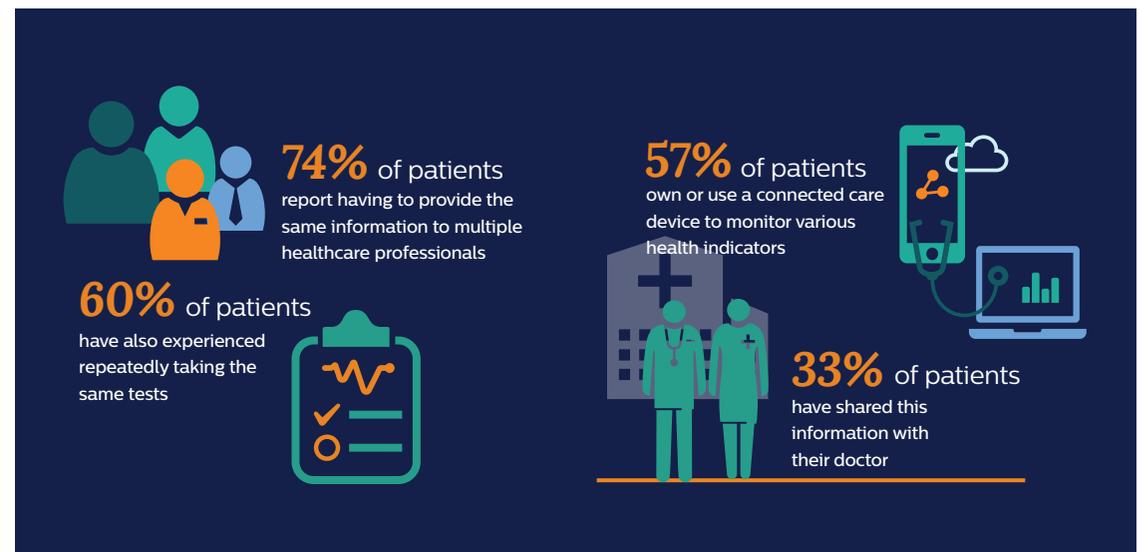

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Mr Fernando Erazo, Head of Healthcare Informatics Solutions and Services, Philips ASEAN Pacific

Assoc Prof James Yip, Chief Medical Information Officer, National University Health System

Teymoor Nabili, Moderator, Channel NewsAsia Perspectives

74% of patients report having to provide the same information to multiple healthcare professionals

60% of patients have also experienced repeatedly taking the same tests

57% of patients own or use a connected care device to monitor various health indicators

33% of patients have shared this information with their doctor

Source: Future health index 2016, commissioned by Phillips. www.futurehealthindex.com

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