Mobile Health: More Than Just Hype

PricewaterhouseCoopers: “Our analysis of mHealth reveals mobile is positioned to have a huge impact on how healthcare is delivered.”

When one reads or hears about the latest trends in healthcare, the first topic springing forth from the top of the page is inevitably mobile health (also known as mHealth). We’ve certainly added to the conversation, posting about how mobile health apps help patients track their own care, and about how while the future of mobile health is bright, the status quo failed its most recent checkup.

It would be easy to dismiss mobile health and the buzz surrounding its potential as the latest exaggeration of a hyperactive media and a public at large desperate for a technological revolution in healthcare. It is made easier still by looking at mHealth’s history of failing to live up to its outsized potential. But this time, the hype is real. Mobile health is here to stay.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, the multinational accounting and professional services firm, says mobile health “offers opportunities to address one of the most pressing global challenges: making healthcare more accessible, faster, better and cheaper.” Download their full report here.
There are some **competing tensions in the current healthcare landscape**, such as the battles between the need for innovation and the resistance of some doctors and patients to change. Over half of patients surveyed say mHealth will improve the cost, quality, and convenience of healthcare in the next three years, while 60% of doctors think widespread adoption is inevitable, but will take time and require changes in behavior.

Another source of tension is the independence and access to care and control over their own health it offers to patients. 60% of patients surveyed who use mHealth say it has already replaced visits to doctors or nurses, while 64% of doctors worry that it makes patients too independent. A balance will need to be struck between these two competing viewpoints before mHealth can truly develop.

A concern that is oft repeated is that the transition to different types of mobile health will be very expensive. An interesting headline, *Hospital Calculates The ROI Of An iPad At 9 Days*, comes via Dan Munro, who writes for Forbes on healthcare innovation.

Munro recounts the story of a hospital CIO investigating the return on a large investment into iPad technology, and determining that the decision was nearly a no-brainer. They’d pay for themselves within 2 weeks. These important technology decisions are not made without first examining the culture of the organization and the ability of the technology to affect change in their specific situation, but the fact that hospital leaders are determining large-scale technology purchases can make business-sense is exciting news.

The continued development and implementation of mobile health is a boon for healthcare, as it seems that what was once just a hot trend is now capable of making an actual difference in patient’s lives. After all, as PwC said in their report, mHealth is “not a separate industry, but rather it’s the future of a healthcare industry that’s evolving to care for patients differently, putting them first to deliver services better, faster and less expensively.”