

TEDMED Tuesday: The Great Challenges and Achieving Medical Innovations

The discussion surrounding the [TEDMED Great Challenge – Achieving Medical Innovation](#) is currently underway. It focuses on what medical innovations are needed in healthcare. This discussion is critical and is nowhere complete. In conjunction with the discussion, it is also important to celebrate the technological advances that have occurred in the past few years that help patients connect better with the healthcare community.

It's hard to believe that just a short decade ago, there were no iPods, iPhones or iPads. No Facebook or Twitter either for that matter. Yet today, a majority of people wouldn't know how to function without their smartphones or social networks. As technology innovation continues to advance, consumers have embraced the changes and become accustomed to having information and personal connections at their fingertips.

These advancements have transcended the consumer world, pushing the medical community to adopt and innovate utilizing these technologies. Embracing technology in healthcare to enhance daily communication with patients has moved beyond electronic medical records and offering medical information online. Mobile, tablets, and webcam technologies have found a place in the world of medicine.

Manhattan Research recently released its [Cybercitizen Health Study 2012](#), which uncovered findings regarding the popularity of [mobile technologies](#) for health use among consumers. Although online health activities are still primarily desktop-based, the research confirmed that the adoption of mobile and health tablet activity is increasing.

A recent article in [HIT Consultant](#) discusses the Manhattan Research study in depth and analyzes how the technology is transforming the patient-physician relationship. The article points out how technologies are now going beyond treatment journey to transforming the very nature of the patient-physician relationship as well as the conversations regarding care.

Access to mobile devices, tablets, and apps are providing physicians with more tools to connect with patients and each other, but how to truly harness the potential of the technologies' use in healthcare remains largely unrealized.

One organization that is doing great work to realize the opportunities presented by innovations in healthcare is [California HealthCare Foundation](#). We featured them [yesterday](#) in our weekly Mayo Mondays series, and their website has great resources available for use.

APPS AND TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS

Earlier this year, [Kaiser Permanente](#) made its entire electronic health care system – the most extensive electronic medical record offering in the world – available to its 9 million members via an Android app. According to an article published in [Forbes](#), Kaiser patients can now make appointments, check lab tests, order medicines, and communicate with their physicians from the palm of their hands.

New healthcare apps are constantly being developed and are helping to enhance the patient experience. One such app is Appointment Status, an app that was developed by a doctor and provides patients with information to avoid long waits and enables them to schedule appointments mobility.

Other types of apps are being designed for physicians to help patients manage chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. One example is WellDoc, a diabetes manager system. Another example is Ideomed, which provides an app that can be personalized for managing asthma.

According to a New York Times article: “If smartphone-based systems can reduce the amount of other medical care that patients need, the potential benefit to the health care system would be enormous; the total cost of treating diabetes alone in 2007 was \$174 billion, according to the most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It’s even being predicted that the app prescriptions may be covered by insurance in the future.”

Telemedicine is providing specialists and physicians the ability to see patients in remote areas that would otherwise mandate traveling long distances or waiting to be seen until a doctor visits the area.

Technology innovation will continue to impact and transform the healthcare industry. As innovation progresses, the need to analyze the best methods of connecting technology with patients and caregivers within healthcare environments will increase. Current solutions include Pocket, a highly maneuverable, smooth-gliding worksurface manufactured by Steelcase Health that occupies a footprint no larger than a person.

The fact that technology can have a positive impact on the patient experience will more than likely drive innovation faster and further. It’s hard to know where the technology will push healthcare in the future, but the following infographic and article offers predictions of what’s possible over the next 30 years. It’s an exciting glimpse at the possibilities the future holds for technology innovation in healthcare:

Learn more about the Great Challenges program here.

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