Connected Health

The User-Driven Transformation of Health Care

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In recent years, we have seen unprecedented advances in health care. Thanks to ubiquitous connectivity and an increasing reliance on mobile devices, individuals, health care professionals (HCPs), and health care and lifestyle brands are more empowered than ever to continue to drive such changes – and to revolutionize health care as we know it.
In the face of new potentials and new demands in the health care space, as well as the digitization of daily life, the health care industry is feeling significant pressure to reinvent itself and keep up. Indeed, industry experts and innovators predict that the digital transformation of health care is imminent – and we agree.

In order for the future of health care to be truly responsive, strategic, and sustainable, however, it is imperative that we frame the discussion holistically. It’s especially important that this transformation be understood in terms of a user-driven health care ecosystem, in which a range of participants – from individuals to communities to care providers to industry players—are all actively pushing, informing, and enriching the shift to connected health. So, where do we begin?

Connected health is not just about technology. It’s about more than cool apps that can measure our vital signs and grant us insight into our daily habits (steps taken, food eaten, etc.). At its core, connected health revolves around what technology enables between people and for people. In a connected health system, people, organizations, devices, and networks work together to enable:

- increased access, improved care, and better outcomes;
- lower costs; and
- higher participant satisfaction.

As such, connected health embodies a true paradigm shift for health care, transforming how it is delivered and received on an individual and societal level.

**Connected Health is:**

- Network
- Mobile
- Device
- Patient
- Community

**Driving the Transformation**

We are currently experiencing a super convergence that will dramatically affect the future of health care. At the same time as technological and scientific advancements are enabling better care, user needs and expectations are rising. This convergence is moving us toward a new health care paradigm, wherein the various participants in the ecosystem will become increasingly connected and leverage technology for better outcomes across the board.

With constant access to health information online and a plethora of tools for collecting biometric data, people are becoming experts on their conditions so they can better advocate for the care they need and how and when they want that care to be delivered. With social health networks on the rise, family, friends, and communities are becoming more empowered members of care teams. With secure cloud-based tools and the growth of mobile devices in the workplace, HCP’s are able to provide better care while increasing efficiency. Finally, with the rise of big data, industry players will be able to isolate exactly what’s working for the people they serve and, as a result, more often deliver what those people really need and want.
In order to work more efficiently, however, the entire ecosystem must be strategically connected so that each participant’s preferred outcomes may be realized. This process is rife with potential and opportunities, and it merits deep critical analysis. Who is driving the process? Who is connecting the dots in the ecosystem? What methods and ways of thinking might help speed up and improve this transformation?

To start, we must frame and understand the ecosystem from the perspective of its key participants, with a focus on their goals and potential gains, as well as what improvements to the system must be made such that the default becomes healthier outcomes.

In addition to these key participants, a whole host of contributing members of society – from city planners and public health advocates to architects, designers and chefs, to name but a few – will do their part to make the world a healthier place.
We must understand the ecosystem from the perspective of its key participants – what are their goals, potential gains, and most desirable future outcomes?
Pinpointing Challenges and Barriers
In any system, however, the goals of one participant group can run counter to another’s, slowing the potential for transformation. The health care space is no exception: far too often, the dots are not being connected, and stakeholders end up working against one another as they try to transform the system.

HCP’s, providers, payers, and industry players are providing piecemeal, fragmented, and what many patients consider far too expensive care because they are beholden to an overly complex system that is resistant and slow to change.

Governments are imposing complicated, highly fragmented regulations that lag behind technical innovation or consumer expectations and are time-consuming to enforce.

Provers are not putting the right IT in place to support their staff and many HCP’s simply don’t have even the basic, well-functioning tools they need to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities.

Many industry players need to enhance their understanding and in-depth consideration of HCP workflow, as well as the social obstacles that can hamper HCP efficiency.

How do we start connecting the dots between participants in the ecosystem to provide better care and improve health? We can begin by understanding what connected health will look like in the future.
What will connected health look like?

1. **Democratized Care.** Everyone will have a chance to be healthy, with access to care and data regardless of location, condition, or socio-economic status. Individuals – whether as patients, health seekers, health coaches or community health workers – will have access to their and others’ data so they can become their own best advocates and also empower their communities; HCP’s will have access to individual patient data across institutions and geographies, as well as broader population-based datasets, to make more informed treatment decisions; and industry players will have access to adherence data to improve existing products or come up with new, better solutions to meet their customers’ needs.

   Sweden is paving the way with a national system of individual health accounts (Personligt Hälso-konto). The service, to be launched in Fall 2013, will be available to all Swedes.

2. **Personalized Care.** One’s health will no longer be measured by vital signs alone, but also by lifestyle behaviors and perception of health. This holistic portrait will enable providers to deliver individualized treatments. Advances in genomics will also facilitate increasingly tailored and customized care.

3. **Collaborative Care.** Individuals, their caregivers, and their communities will become more active and empowered members of the care team. The HCP to patient relationship will develop into one akin to that of master and apprentice so that individuals can learn, over time, to better understand their state of health and manage their care. People will continue to contribute their data to improve the health of their communities and beyond. Industry players will opt for more cooperative approaches, working together to find the best way forward.

   CommonWell Health Alliance, announced at the 2013 HIMSS conference, is a case in point.

4. **Anytime, Anywhere Care.** Care that happens anytime and anywhere will enable a shift from discrete moments of care to a seamless care continuum. People will be able to get care when they need it, not just when they’re sick and happen to be in a clinical setting. HCP’s will monitor patients remotely to provide just-in-time care and to achieve better work/life balance. Payers will save costs by supporting continuous and preventative care scenarios.
With the above tenets in place, a new health care paradigm will be possible. It will be proactive, allowing care to happen when a person is in need, regardless of time or location; preventative, integrating lifestyle changes into treatment plans; predictive, so that acute incidents and pandemics can get the swift response they need; and preemptive, so that we can stop disease before it starts.

This new paradigm will also present a whole host of benefits across the ecosystem, such as greater accessibility, independence, flexibility, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, interoperability, intelligence, and integration, to name a few.

What next?

A successful transition to this new paradigm will not be owned and driven by any one player or leader. In order for the vision of connected health to become reality, the ecosystem must evolve and develop collaboratively and cooperatively. Everyone, from those within the formal health care system to industry players who are innovating to push the system, will play a critical role in this joint effort. After all, the result—better, happier lives in more prosperous, connected societies—will benefit us all.

If you want to be at the forefront of the transformation to connected health, questions to ask yourself, your colleagues, your customers, and your networks include:

- What are your customers’ and stakeholders’ unmet needs and expectations, and how will you meet them?
- How will these changing needs and expectations push your organization and the industry at large?
- How will they inform your role in the transformation to connected health?
- Who, internally, might leverage knowledge and best practices so that you can fill this role?
- What are your competitors doing to adapt to the connected health transformation, and what can you learn from them?
- What can your organization do internally to iteratively learn how to improve health? And how can your lessons learned serve as an example for others?
- What can you learn from other industries?
- How can you transparently, efficiently, and effectively address your organization’s needs and challenges?
- What will happen if you do not act now?
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