ESC: E-health Vital for Reducing Burden of Cardiovascular Disease

European cardiology leaders have said that E-health is vital to win the battle against heart disease. The position paper was published today in the European Heart Journal and outlines how the ESC plans to exploit e-health in education and research, while tackling issues of quality control and data security.

It is projected that by 2017, more than 3 billion people will own a smartphone. Nearly half of them will use health apps. "Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a central role in helping us make decisions in almost every aspect of life including what to buy and where to travel, and patients are often frustrated that healthcare does not keep pace," said lead author Professor Martin R. Cowie, professor of cardiology at Imperial College London and the Royal Brompton Hospital in London, UK.

Prof Cowle also points out that ICT has significant potential to personalise healthcare and enable patients to take more responsibility for their health as well as cut down costs of hospital stays. He believes that e-health could play a vital role in reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe. It can also be used proactively to develop, assess and implement ICT innovations that support cardiovascular health.

The ESC's medium term action plan is to:

- Facilitate wider implementation of e-health
- Educate and train ESC members in the appropriate use of e-health
- Discuss regulation and quality control (including benchmarks) with relevant organisations
- Participate in societal and political discussions on data security and confidentiality
- Support research into the development, evaluation and implementation of e-health technologies
- Promote policy dialogue at local, national and international levels with governments, regulators, payers, professional bodies, citizens, patients, healthcare professionals and industry
- Provide information for European citizens on the risks and benefits of e-health applications.

Prof Cowle also highlights the need to regulate health Appls and to adopt a global approach so that consumers are not misled into purchasing a technology that is less beneficial than advertised. He also emphasises on the need for clarity on issues like data protection, confidentiality and legal liability of developers and service providers. He explains that the ESC will work with all stakeholders - from consumer and patient organisations to health professionals and organisations, public authorities, App developers, telecommunication service providers, mobile device manufacturers, and others. The primary goal is to optimise the design and implementation of new technologies for cardiovascular health.

The paper talks about ESC's plan to take the lead on making e-health an essential part of educational events. E-health will be part of the the ESC curriculum and syllabus so that cardiologists and healthcare professionals acquire adequate knowledge and develop the necessary skills. In addition, the ESC will support and encourage its members to conduct research to develop ICT solutions, improve inter-operability and evaluate health and healthcare impact and value for money. A summit will be organised for relevant stakeholders to develop criteria for evaluating technologies, and develop guidelines for the design of e-health trials.

Professor Cowie said: "Patients and cardiologists need to know whether a new ICT solution is worth using and we will assist with this, for example by providing reviews of technologies, including Apps, conducted by our members. E-health is a rapidly moving field and we want to maximise its potential to improve cardiovascular health and prevent cardiovascular disease."

Source: ESC

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