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Kpmg Report: Tech-Savvy Baby Boomers to Drive Demand for E-Health

The report from KPMG together with the Manchester Business School, Accelerating Innovation: The power of the crowd, is based on in-depth interviews with ehealth executives representing 15 countries, as well as insights from KPMG's global healthcare partners. Due to changing demographics, the need to reduce costs and to increase the quality of care, e-health is seen as a crucial approach to address the global imperative to improve and advance healthcare.

Nearly 60 percent of the healthcare executives interviewed said that the top two drivers of e-health will be patient expectation (61 percent) and an increase in efficiency (58 percent). More than 30 percent of respondents said that the main barrier to sustainable e-health systems is funding (34 percent), while 29 percent believed it to be professional attitudes.

According to Dr. Mark Britnell, KPMG's Global Chair for Health and a partner in the UK firm: "Implementing e-health requires conviction and commitment, but the benefits to patients can be enormous if done well. Our global study offers direction for success and showcases leading examples which can give decision makers the confidence and courage to press on."

"In order for ehealth systems to deliver on the promises of reduced costs and improved quality of care, clinicians will need to be brought on board – either willingly or in response to consumer demand," Britnell added.

"Today's smartphone user is tomorrow's patient who wants greater access and control of their healthcare and their medical records," said Jan De Boer, Global Health IT Lead for KPMG in the Netherlands. "And, along with patients, tech-savvy clinicians need to be seen not as a force to be won over, but as a catalyst for change."

To create real change in the healthcare system, through telehealth or telemedicine, the report cites three conditions essential for success:

- Crowd-accelerated innovation;
- Collaborative alignment; and
- Creative dislocation.

Crowd accelerated innovation denotes the impact and influence of the collective – when many people come together to affect change, such as in the human genome project or the free internet encyclopedia, Wikipedia. Collaborative alignment requires the focused interests and efforts of a wide range of participants. Creative dislocation proposes that process and systems must be abandoned to move forward, such as digital imaging versus conventional film x-rays.

Successful projects that employ these approaches include the Care Connectivity Consortium (CCC) in the US, Singapore's National Electronic Health Record system (NEHR) and Denmark's e-health portal, www.Sundhed.dk.

Recently the UK Department of Health released its "Headline Findings" on the Whole System Demonstrator project, the largest randomised control trial of its kind in the world. This investigation of telehealth and telecare reveals that "if used correctly, telehealth can deliver a 15 percent reduction in acute and emergency patient visits, a 20 percent reduction in emergency admissions and a 45 percent reduction in mortality rates."

"While there is no single path to e-health transformation, it is too important and too expensive for organisations to repeat the mistakes of their peers," said Britnell. "Indeed, much value will come from sharing lessons between countries, systems, institutions and professionals."

Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda eHealth attended the conference and believes, "Building the evidence base is essential to deploying e-Health. Once we have concrete facts and figures, it is much easier to convince others they should take the same road. And it will be easier for them to put their money where their mouth is." Kroes was particularly impressed with one example from the report: "Hong Kong has cut hospital re-admissions by 25 percent! It did this through introducing a basic ehealth registration, hospital admission and risk reduction programme for the elderly. No wonder it will now be extended to all seven million citizens in Hong Kong."

One key opportunity for e-health lies in care for the elderly, which is increasingly important in our ageing society. For Kroes the most important thing is getting all stakeholders together: Public and private sectors; finance; industry, carers and physicians. In this context ICT can work to its true potential. She went on to say that talking is not enough: "I do not just want a forum for discussion – I want action and outcomes." Her three proposed actions are innovative solutions to prevent falls, promoting successful integrated care models for chronic diseases among the elderly (e.g. by using remote monitoring) and getting 30 European regions to work together on innovative ways to ensure patients follow their prescriptions.

For more information, please visit: www.kpmg.com

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