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Letters...

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Who you gonna call?

Alexa, Echo, Siri, et al ... voice assistants to the rescue? Or not? Let's face it, we all engage our smart tools to do everything from changing the channel to ordering groceries to finding out which team won the ballgame to setting the temperature and lights. The time has now come for these same consumer-supported features to go HC. In February 2021, David Box, managing director, HealthTech at Star, noted that while adding hands-free as an option is immensely beneficial to patients, providers, and healthcare industry professionals alike and that digital voice assistants work best as part of a multimodal approach when a user can interact by voice when they're home and by text in public, there are inherent challenges voice faces: compliance and privacy.



He says this is the major reason why the realization of digital voice assistants at scale in healthcare has yet to be realized in the same way as in other industries, many of which have already crossed the chasm from early adopter to majority use because privacy isn't as much of a concern.

But with Alexa achieving HIPAA-compliance in 2019, the tide may have finally have changed — or might have if it had not been for the disruption of COVID — and it is expected there will be continued investment, adoption, and attempts to have voice technology realize its full potential.

One of the key areas of potential is in the context of in-home health, one of the biggest areas of interest, which is then followed by investment. Again, according to Mr. Box and his company's research, in the U.S. alone, 10,000 people per day turn 65. The current healthcare system simply doesn't have the capacity to manage both the urgent and non-urgent care needs of these individuals. Leveraging voice assistants and digital health provides them the opportunity to maintain their independence and live in their homes longer. This leads to a cascade of follow-on benefits as well, such as improved medication adherence and a better quality of life.

It's been several years since we spoke about the ubiquity of digital tools in the healthcare system, but the topic bears a refresh as we, as patients, have more options to improve our journeys from overall wellness to diagnosis to treatment — both at home and at the HCP office.

As noted in a recent IQVIA special report, the proliferation of digital health tools, including mobile health apps and wearable sensors, holds great promise for improving human health, bringing new approaches to the management of health conditions, and advancing human data science. IQVIA researchers report health-related mobile applications available to consumers from top app stores worldwide now surpass 350,000, with more than 90,000 digital health apps added in 2020 — an average of more than 250 apps per day. That's a lot of apps.

Throughout this issue, we touch on many of the ways "digital" is impacting the healthcare ecosystem. We hope you find these insights enlightening as you look to create your strategies to engage patients, physicians, and other stakeholders in a virtual new world.

Taren Grom
Editor

Their word...

ROBIN ROBINSON
Senior Editor



Patient services in the post-COVID world will move beyond financial assistance to include more personalized digital patient engagement programs.

KIM RIBBINK
Senior Editor



Pharma marketers today need to be on the ball and ready to anticipate the needs and expectations of digitally savvy consumers.

CAROLYN GRETTON
Features Editor



Our thought leaders are encouraging medical science liaisons to add social media to their virtual engagement toolkit to authentically connect with healthcare practitioners and key opinion leaders.

Coming in September

- ▶ The Keys to an Innovative Culture
- ▶ Brand Bonds: Agency/Client Relationships
- ▶ Synthetic Control Models
- ▶ Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- ▶ Commercial Influencers
- ▶ Chief Strategy Officers
- ▶ Showcase: Patient Engagement Solutions