

# FT DIGITAL HEALTH SUMMIT USA



## Evolving Patient Attitudes

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Technology is evolving at an alarming rate. In the space of 15 years, we have progressed from using a mobile phone to make phone calls to the adoption of a device that is a necessity to manage our lives. We rely on our mobile phones to capture our memories as high-quality photos, entertain us with movies, games and anything else on the internet. Apps allow us to manage our businesses, finances, emails and more. Video calls enable us to connect face to face, with anyone in the world.

While there has been extensive innovation, the real challenge we face is not trying to maintain this electrifying momentum in discovery, but finding ways of implementing changes so that they can positively disrupt industries to ensure all stakeholders benefit. The implementation of new technologies into healthcare is a particular struggle.

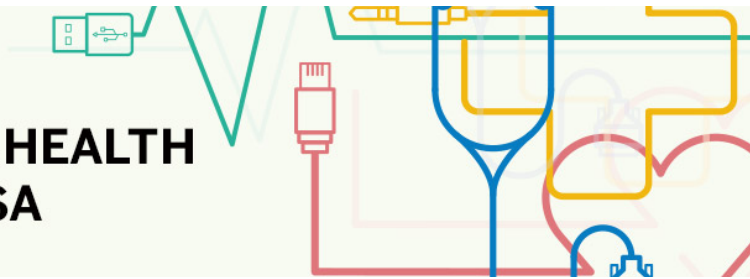
If you were to ask me, "how is the healthcare industry keeping up with the pace of powerful tools being developed?" I would reply,

"Essentially, we're not."

Following the adoption of the internet, we have entered a new era of medicine in which every patient has access to the full medical encyclopedia on his or her phones. As patients have become more informed, we have moved away from the paternalistic relationship doctors once had with their patients. What this means is that the dependent information starved patient no longer accepts the parent figures (doctor) non-negotiable treatment plans. Patients expect, and rightly so, to be fully informed and consulted in the decision-making process that results in their management plan.

While access to the internet empowers patients with more information, there have been numerous adverse effects. The world's most famous doctor, "Dr Google" has so far done a less than marvellous job of diagnosing nearly 90% of the world's population with a cough as having the first signs of lung cancer. I jest of course, but the fact is there is so much misinformation out

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there that could have adverse effects on patients mental and physical wellbeing if acted upon without consulting a medical professional.

Take for example a young mother, let's call her Jennifer, who has noticed that her three-year-old daughter has suddenly developed a rash. If she does a quick online diagnostic search, her options will be between an innocent viral outbreak versus a life-threatening illness being meningitis. Imagine the stress and anxiety that this mother could experience, sitting at home thinking that her child might have a life-threatening condition. She is forced to drive her daughter to an emergency department and sit in an anxious state whilst waiting hours to see a doctor just to find out it is a virus. Or even worse she had dismissed the information altogether, and decided to stay at home, whilst her daughter's health deteriorated.

Patient expectations to become a joint partner in treatment planning is not the only thing that is changing. The on-demand generation, who are resource-rich, and live in the age of Uber and Deliveroo cannot wait for the current setup of GPs. Working parents have less time and resources to take the hours to visit the doctors for themselves or their children. The fact is people expect things right now, at a high quality, and at their convenience.

Long gone are the days where a doctor was easily accessible at your local family clinic. Where you could easily book a same-day appointment and have a personal relationship with a specific doctor who looked after you, your children, then supported them as they grew up and had children of their own too. Your choices these days are trying to book in to see a GP, which is unlikely to remain the same and where the next available appointment could be weeks away. Attending appointments require you to miss work, take your children out of the nursery and sit in the waiting room.

Surely, with the technology we have today, there is a better way?

Let's go back to Jennifer, what if instead of experiencing stress from googling her daughter's symptoms and waiting hours to see a doctor in an emergency department she had access to a doctor immediately using a telemedicine service? What if Jennifer could access her usual doctor or, a doctor that had access to her daughter's records during the appointment and she did not have to travel anywhere?

The technology exists.

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Mothers, like Jennifer, can have a full consultation, with a doctor informed of her daughters history, from her mobile phone. The technology exists to allow patients to access their records online and share this information with a doctor over an application. Doctors can review the immunisation status and history of the young patient to help them decide quickly whether any serious "red flag" signs or symptoms indicate the need to seek emergency investigations and treatment.

The need for medical advice from an ever busier and demanding population is present. The overworked and overstretched doctor situation is a reality. Isn't it time we evolved with the technology and changing patient attitudes and delivered a health care solution that is fit for our future? I believe we are on the cusp of seeing an explosion of health tech that is going to revolutionise the way we manage our patients to provide faster, more accessible and a greater choice of resources to them which will help to support a more healthy lifestyle.