

Game-changing Digitalization Ups the Ante for Pharma Innovation – Part 2

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In the previous edition of this blog, we spoke about two interesting trends that caught our attention at EyeForPharma 2017. **We discussed how some of the reputed pharma companies have started to innovate by launching strategically important medical apps. We had also discussed how patient-centricity has emerged as a major theme in the industry.**

In this concluding part, we are back with another interesting concept, while also providing a quick reality check on these innovative trends.

3. Providing better accessibility to Healthcare:

There were heated discussions around another perennial problem that has been crippling the healthcare industry for decades together, the problem being – “Market Access”. The following data derived by the World Health Organization is an eye opener, as it reveals that big wide gap, between the providers and those who require the provision.

What is making the issue of ‘market access’ more significant is the continued growth in global population. By 2030, 1.4 billion people are projected to be >60 years old, which means the number of people with chronic illness would jump significantly. According to IHME (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation) 2016 report, the global spending on health is expected to increase to \$18 Trillion by 2040.

The estimate provided above makes it clear that the global healthcare spend is about to grow manifold in the next couple of decades, and that brings us to the most important question. What type of strategy is required to better facilitate this tremendous growth potential? Would it work if we focus on developing newer therapies, or should we give preference to improving the patient’s access to current treatment?

Both the topics raised above might even co-exist as the industry races forward to achieve the big growth potential. When it comes to game plans and strategies, what comes as a revelation this time around is the strong intent being displayed by the stakeholders.

Large pharma players have dedicated digital healthcare and data analytics teams in place with definite budget allocations. They have also been partnering with digital experts to make care more convenient, coordinated, and responsive.

Today, multiple stakeholders are involved in treatment decisions. Data analytics can play a vital role in

taking this stakeholder partnerships to a new level.

However, all these discussions and debates echoed the one sentiment that, pharma industry has to move very fast from “talking digital “to “doing digital”, and then towards “transforming digital healthcare”. For example – if we analyze the three trends mentioned above, there are few problems that still remain.

- As far as the adoption of digital technology is concerned, some of the industry experts pointed out that as much as **we are fascinated by this field of digitization, and we also need to digest the fact that very few healthcare apps actually make an impact.** A recent study conducted by Berlin-based mobile app industry consultancy establishes the availability of 2,59,000 healthcare/fitness and medical apps, of which 76% have < 50K downloads and only 3% have >1 million users. So where are we going wrong? It was highlighted that the focus should be on actual need states, native workflow and user psychology. The models should be tested and the feedback should be followed.
- Talking of patient-centricity, **it was observed that there is an influx of “point or single solutions” targeting one therapeutic area but hardly any talk of “combined or multiple solutions amalgamated into one and offered as a “per patient solution”.** For example, a patient may be suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure, so, could there be an application that manages both as one solution?
- Talking of market access, some of the industry veterans mentioned that **there is a need to change the overall business model with a focus on delivering outcomes/health management, targeting the right patient with the right medicine in order to make access happen.** The model must provide more choices to patients without compromising on quality.

In general, one can say that the time is ripe for the industry to break old patterns and move forward before a parallel industry disrupts innovation in this space.

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