

PRESS POINT – THE HUMAN TOUCH IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Thursday, 3 October 2019

Today's EHFG press point was themed "The human touch in a digital world". It set out to address the challenges of the increasingly technologized healthcare sector and explored what role the health workforce plays in this digital transformation process.

Ran Balicer, Chief Innovation Officer, Clalit / Founding Director, Clalit Research Institute & BGU Public Health Professor, Israel

"When we look at digital transformation, the key fact is not the "digital", it's the "transformation". There is no point facilitating digitalisation without dramatically changing the foundations of care processes. In other words: if you take a broken clinical process and digitalise it, then you get a costly, broken digitalised process."

"When make our plans for the future, we need to keep asking ourselves: Why? Why do we introduce this system? What will be the impact on the patient, on the population, on the providers? There has to be proof that the benefit is real and obtainable."

"There is a fear that digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will reduce the human touch. This could not be further from the truth. In their daily work, physicians are doing too many repetitive tasks that does not require their unique skills. AI will allow doctors and nurses to go back to their real purpose."

"AI will also allow us to move from intuitive medicine to introducing more field safe mechanisms, because currently we are failing our patients too often. Today 30% of care is wasted and human error is the third cause of death."

"Digital transformation would offer us an opportunity to move away from the tyranny of reactive medicine and move towards proactive and preventive care. Assisted by data and AI, we can locate those patients in need of care before they actually become symptomatic. This will be both sustainable and effective. Overall, I think that AI will allow us to have more of the human touch."

Marco Marsella, Head of Unit, Directorate-General Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG Connect), European Commission

"Digital transformation will be data-driven. Data will be at the heart of the transformation, it is the enabler for the continuity of care across Member States and for the promotion of personalised medicine. However, data is used differently across Member States and their information systems, so we need to find mechanisms to make sure that data is available for those who need it. Data should ultimately be controlled by citizens."

"In order to make sure that this happens, and here comes the human touch, we need to ensure there is trust in the way technological solutions are developed. This is about making sure that the needs of those using these technologies are met and about empowering them to take control of their health. Trust will come from ensuring that the data is protected, and from the way the European Commission is moving ahead in putting together rights and innovations."

"The European Union is investing and supporting the evolution of the landscape. The European Commission is now working to adopt a strategy at EU level for supporting AI which includes AI in

healthcare systems. In addition, the European Commission supports researchers to come up with new ideas and test them in healthcare systems.”

“Enabling trust in the digital society forms the basis of the European Commission’s work with Member States and of the work to make sure that digital solutions benefit citizens.”

Indra Joshi, Digital Health & AI Clinical Lead, NHS, England

“We mentioned the importance of ensuring that doctors and nurses need to become digitally savvy, but they don’t make up the entire healthcare workforce. There is a huge proportion of people working in care and community practices. So how do you actually support them in understanding the new tools that have been developed and how can they explain them to their patients?”

“It’s also vital to talk about the public and patients when we discuss digital health. Because all of you in the room are people, you are all humans, and you want to feel empowered and have a better experience when it comes to health. You have good experiences in other sectors, why should you not have the same in the healthcare sector? To help people manage their health better, the NHS launched an app called ‘Empower the Person’.”

“We need to create standards, frameworks and collaborations. One of the key aspects of my role is to create a pipeline for new (digital health) ideas to become a reality. How do you ensure and validate products, how do you implement a product and ensure that it is actually impactful? This is of great importance.”

“In healthcare, it is important that we also provide people with options, particularly elderly populations who can feel insecure with modern technologies, or migrants who might not speak the local language. So you need to have the option of approaching your healthcare digitally but you also need the backup option of doing it.”

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact:
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