Insight Driven Health
Healthcare IT puts Norwegian Consumers’ Fingers on the Pulse

Recent research confirms a long-standing wish of healthcare consumers to participate more actively in their own healthcare.

Norwegian health authorities can drive significant improvements as envisaged by the healthcare reform by leveraging recent advances in digital self-service technologies. Digital patient engagement will help support the desire of healthcare consumers to participate in the management of their health, bring about efficiencies for providers and generate a wealth of data that will advance the role of analytics-powered medicine. Combined, these trends will contribute to Norway’s move into a modern era of proactive, predictive, patient-centric health management.

Accenture’s 2013 Patient Engagement Survey¹ across nine countries reveals that 95 percent of patients and 85 percent of doctors surveyed believe patients should have at least some access to their electronic health records.

Some 75 percent of patient respondents want full access. Yet most respondents (61 percent) say they have no access to their health records, and an equal percentage of doctors believe their access should be restricted.

In a 16-country study that included Norway, the Accenture Citizen Experience Study², respondents were asked how important it is that their government act to improve their health and healthcare in areas including public engagement³, and how their governments fared in this regard.

The study found that 67 percent of respondents regard engagement to be essential or very important. However, a consistently high performance gap was reported in all areas, including 44 percent for engagement.

Prevention is better than cure
Reasons for this may include reluctance on the part of doctors to relinquish control over patient care and to break with a tradition of retrospective healthcare in favour of a more proactive, patient-centric model.

But patient engagement can contribute to the successful treatment of diseases where this depends on early detection, thereby enabling more effective health management by freeing doctors to deal only with serious or unavoidable acute episodes while making clinical decisions based on more accurate data.

Patient frustration may drive a change in the market. Just more than half of respondents to the patient engagement survey who do not have access to their records (52%) say they would consider switching to a provider who does offer it.

Moreover, as self-service technologies make their way into the common consciousness, change is inevitable.

A California-based company, Metabolomx, has developed a portable breath test device that can detect lung cancer with 83% accuracy⁴. The hunt for other innovative sensing technologies is under way, with initiatives like the Nokia Sensing XChallenge⁵ leading the charge.

Winning applications include technologies for non-invasive monitoring of blood circulation parameters and other disruptive technologies emerging at the convergence of physics, biomedicine, and...
nanotechnology, facilitating simple, convenient and low-cost consumer-centric healthcare solutions.

Benefits

Falling under the general category of ambient and assisted living (AAL), self-service technologies give consumers the diagnostic tools to assert more control over their own care and provide effective support for patients.

AAL further contributes to safety, security, social participation and mobility, and strengthens ill or disabled individuals’ ability to fend for themselves. It can act as support to relatives, help improve accessibility, resource utilisation and quality of services, and even prevent the need for services or admission.

Self-testing further offers more frequent opportunities for obtaining patient data, which will raise the profile of predictive analytics in healthcare.

Examples

Several Norwegian pilot projects, involving municipalities, technology providers and research partners, demonstrate the multi-faceted benefits of AAL technologies. Examples include “Home Safety” (which translates as Tryghetspakken) and “Safe Tracks” (Trygge spor).

A white paper from Sintef, the largest independent research organisation in Scandinavia, outlines six case studies of Norwegian municipalities in Stavanger and Randaberg, Lyngdal, Drammen, Bærum, Vågå and Nøtterøy.

Another trial of a digital calendar planning tool used in conjunction with sensor technologies demonstrated potential to support elderly people at home. The explorative use of electronic pill dispensers at Sarpsborg Municipality, reminding users at pre-set times and providing the correct dosage, further provides demonstration of the benefits.

Technology acceptance in the market

Many AAL technologies adequately address end-users’ needs—and more continue to reach the market. To achieve significant market penetration, attention must be given to building the required value network and establishing a framework for measuring and improving the quality of technologies.

Dealing with the volume and velocity of data produced by self-service technologies will further require a robust analytics platform.

Renewed concerns about privacy should finally be tackled head-on by healthcare professionals, highlighting a service experience advantage. Privacy and ethics around personal data disclosure are already being addressed on a national level, as legislation on health records is being reviewed.

Using current momentum, Norwegian health authorities can drive beneficial change in healthcare delivery and public health.

Methodology

Accenture conducted an online survey of 9,015 adults (aged 18 and above) across nine countries—Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Singapore, Spain and the United States—to assess consumer perception of their healthcare providers’ electronic capabilities. The survey was fielded by Harris Interactive. Where relevant, the survey cites select findings from the Accenture Doctors Survey to compare the doctor and consumer responses.

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