

Digital Healthcare? Consumers Not Really Interested



Patients can now shop for care, use telehealth or communicate by email with clinicians. Sounds like a brave new world but all is not what it seems: [CBS](#) reported that according to a new PwC Research Institute study, [Surviving Seismic Change: Winning a Piece of the \\$5 trillion U.S. Health EcoSystem](#) most consumers don't engage with the opportunities to manage their healthcare.

"Most don't shop for care, ask about prices, email with their clinicians or use telehealth options. Most don't send their physicians data from their activity trackers. Most remain sceptical of the value of electronic medical record systems despite their ubiquity in examination rooms," the report says.

The fact that this is happening while deductible and out-of-pocket costs rise, all aimed at ultimately making healthcare consumers better shoppers and reducing care costs, is puzzling.

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Price Shopping

Most consumers do not query prices. Most do not know what the cost for a healthcare provider visit is. While the report says that stats show more willingness to talk about money, this behaviour is still minimal.

Electronic Communications

Emailing and telehealth are meant to streamline office and ER visits and develop a better rapport between patient and healthcare providers. However, only 25 percent of consumers say they have used email with a healthcare professional, one in 10 has used text and just 1 percent has used [telehealth](#). PwC does point out though that this is not just consumer behaviour as many providers are reluctant to use electronic communications for a variety of reasons.

Tracking Health Data

Apps and monitors detect vital health information from a patient's home directly to a doctor's office. But in spite of the excitement in the sector about wearable technology, only 20 percent of consumers use it. PwC says this could be down to the fact that patients with at least one chronic condition are more likely to be older and probably do not feel comfortable with new technology.

There is some progress though. In a survey, 45 percent of consumers said they would use telehealth in exchange for lower insurance costs and 43 have used the services of a retail health clinic and been happy with the experience.

"The health care industry needs to focus on consumer awareness," the report says. "Consumers are in the centre of the equation, but the health

care industry hasn't figured out yet how that translates into delivering services.”

Source: [CBS News](#)

Image Credit: healthpopuli

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