# Risks and Rewards of mHealth Deployment in the EU



The MIHealth Forum takes place in Barcelona this week in a city, which seeks to become a laboratory for mobile health technology. On 22 May, the European Commission's Gisele Roesems will lead a session on the commission's Green Paper on mHealth deployment, which has the objective of addressing issues and breaking down barriers which exist with stakeholders. The mHealth Green Paper was announced in the eHealth Action Plan 2010-2020.

Mobile Health and Patient Safety

The widespread use of mobile applications has facilitated the delivery of health care for doctors and patients alike. A survey by HIMSS revealed that 45 percent of clinicians employ mobile technology, not only for communication and data collection but to monitor patients with chronic illnesses. Patients, meanwhile, enjoy fewer trips to medical facilities due to the ability to transmit information to and receive care advice from doctors while at home.

Along with convenience comes a concern about protecting patients from ineffective applications and lapses in the secure transfer of information. Equally critical is the risk of alarm fatigue, whereby frequent alerts transmitted by mobile devices to and from care team members overwhelm users and fail to have the intended impact. In fact, alarm fatigue was identified as a major technology hazard in 2013 and alarm management remains a patient safety goal.

Regulation Is Coming to Europe

In April 2014 a consultation was launched by the European Commission to outline a plan "to improve the health and well-being of Europeans through the implementation of mobile devices". The consultation encourages the public to provide their opinions, particularly with regard to patient safety and data security in a mobile health context. For example, participants might consider what kind of damage compensation requirements would be appropriate for mHealth apps.

The use of mobile health technology has thus far resulted in efficient care, citizen empowerment and significant savings of money and time for both physicians and patients. However, risks will increase as more and more people become directly involved in the sharing of private health information. Regulation will be key to protecting both health and health information.

Green Papers Precede Law

Green papers document policy proposals are being considered by the governments of some nations, including members of the European Union and the United Kingdom. They foster discussion, prior to any commitment to legal action. In the case of the mHealth green paper, stakeholder support is sought for determining next steps in the safe use of mobile health technology.

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