

Tech for Health: Share, Talk, Treat: #HealthTech Dialogue Hub



The Novartis Foundation launched its HealthTech Dialogue Hub on 23 February 2021 to promote technology driven healthcare solutions and Artificial Intelligence (AI). This learning hub will host events, share lessons learned and best practices from the roll out of technology-enabled innovations, such as virtual doctors, e-health trackers and online prescriptions. It aims to facilitate ongoing dialogue between government leaders, health care workers and innovators.

“The HealthTech Dialogue Hub is much more than a digital platform. We want to use the power of the dialogue and collaboration to catalyse and accelerate innovation for health system strengthening both in low-and middle-income settings, and high-income settings,” according to Lucy Setian, Associate Director of HealthTech Innovation.

The Foundation is working with local authorities and partners to re-engineer their health systems to be more proactive, predictive and preventative. One such example is the AI nucleus in São Paulo, Brazil. In conjunction with the University Hospital São Paulo, a platform was developed to analyse lung images to help diagnose COVID-19 and predict who may be most at risk of complications, and thus prioritise treatment.

AI screening for leprosy is another significant example where AI helps to better predict outbreaks, improve early detection and improve clinical decision making. This project is developed by Microsoft and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation in Brazil to collect images and data from patients. An algorithm is then trained to identify data and photos of leprosy-like lesions and advises the patient to seek further medical treatment. This technology holds great potential for community health workers in remote outposts, given that leprosy often mimics other diseases, and even for self-screening.

The Foundation has been working with health authorities in Senegal and Brazil to find solutions for early diagnosis of patients with cardiovascular disease. In conjunction with local partners, they developed an app that allows healthcare workers to identify a patient’s risk and advise on lifestyle modifications. These automated screenings for cardiovascular risk can help to closely monitor at-risk patients to help reduce heart attacks and strokes.

As telemedicine is coming of age, especially now due to Covid-19, it has become clear that there is a need for a community to share ideas, engage and exchange thoughts on the challenges they face. The HealthTech Dialogue Hub wants to foster sharing of new tech innovations which can help improve health outcomes and re-imagine health and care systems.

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