

Health tech vital as coronavirus strikes

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There are many lessons that can be drawn from the outbreak of the coronavirus — learned because in times of crisis we draw from adversity and build and safeguard for the future.

COVID-19 has left the world an unambiguous message: We must make changes to ensure we reduce if not eliminate the future cause of pandemics we have helped create.

As technology continues to evolve, a clear commitment is needed to ensure the viability and prosperity of the health tech sector while at the same time breaking down the challenges it faces.

The coronavirus will be a sobering experience for all Australians and as we battle to stave off a potential national health, economic and social crisis far worse than the Great Depression of 1920s and 30s, or the recession in the 80s, it is clear why we must continue to invest in the future of our health tech sector.

What is evident is both the government and finance sector have learned how to respond and the financial stimulus that is required. But more needs to be done around how to better use technology to support the clinical sector.

The digitalisation of telehealth is one example of why we must invest in the health tech sector. But more needs to be done to support growth in telehealth technology, patient engagement and practice technology — all lacking in investment and strategy.

Realising what digital health delivers and creates is far too important not to have it as a central contributing theme to Australia's national health economy.

If we fail to invest in our digital health sector not only to equip our clinicians in difficult times but also to set us up as the leading provider of virtual care for the Asia-Pacific region, we will have transgressed and failed to identify and understand what the true importance of what digital health is really offering and this is not to mention the potential revenue opportunity lost.

In all the global panic and fear COVID-19 has created, where the rational have become irrational and desperation is peaking, health tech has risen to the fore. It is one area that has shone like a beacon through the thick murky haze of fog.

COVID-19 has shown that response teams desperately need to know how to better leverage technology platforms for research reasons and patient responses and treatment.

The future of the medical sector will have virtual and physical patient engagement at the core of it, allowing proactive reach for clinicians when needed, as well as convenience for patients and, most importantly, rapid and safe responses in times where we face a global crisis such as COVID-19.

Health tech systems like cloud-based software platforms and telehealth solutions allow caregivers to work from the safety of their own home, where patients dial in remotely. This is why ongoing investment in the health tech sector is important and why greater funding, research and collaboration is required.

Platforms that allow remote access to a patient's clinical files, the ubiquity of "Point of Care" and what it means, securely collaborating with other care team members, managing and accessing patient pathology results all highlight the need for an urgent paradigm shift around care that provides access and improved health outcomes safely and cost-effectively.

Digital health technologies like telehealth and integrated cloud-based practice management systems go a long way to bring about and create a paradigm shift in care.

When we are sick, we want the best possible care and attention, and part of that care means we are included in the journey. Transparency is a critical component of delivering care in today's world.

Digital health technologies, especially cloud-based practice and clinical management systems, create a ConnectedCare model that enables doctors, clinicians and practices to provide a greater and more informed patient engagement experience.

Such platforms will not only serve as better tools for the sector in terms of safely treating and provide better engagement, but they will also help in the detection of the outbreaks.

Digitising medicine ensures healthcare and medical services are enhanced and can be facilitated via an app on a smartphone, allowing for better care — where the convenience of diagnosing and tracking, regulating, and monitoring medical cycles and adherence to treatment and medication is achieved.

Our health system is regarded as one of the best in the world and our universities, hospitals, doctors and allied health providers are among the best. but to ensure we remain a world leader, part of the jigsaw must ensure the digital health tech sector continues to grow and evolve. As for COVID-19 and the perversity of learning, there are many lessons we can draw from for the future.

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