A new dawn is breaking in global health care. Smart mobile technology is poised to lead the transformation, working together with social networking, cloud computing and big data analytics. EY’s Gary Howe explains how.

Smart mobility can help. Cloud computing, for example, can provide mobile access to health information and applications. Social networks have already begun to provide patient-centric information sharing and peer support, and big data analytics can provide anywhere, anytime diagnostic insights. These advances, underpinned by the proven ability of smartphones and tablets to effect behavioral change, have placed smart mobility at the center of an information technology-enabled vision of health care’s future.

Below we describe how this future is unfolding for four key groups: patients, physicians, providers (e.g., public or private hospitals) and payers (e.g., government or private insurers).

Perspective on patients: mobile empowerment

From Stockholm to San Diego and Mumbai to Moscow, consumers’ lives have been transformed from just a few years ago. Today, they use smart mobile devices to pay for services, check bank accounts, trade stock and surf the web. These new habits and routines are starting to influence how they deal with doctors and hospitals and manage their own health. Just one example: 44 million health-related smartphone apps were downloaded worldwide in 2011. One of the first big waves of patient empowerment is coming at the intersection of mobile and social networking. Consumers can now participate in health-related discussions online, tapping into peer-group knowledge to, for example, compare costs of different providers or obtain fellow sufferers’ advice on treatment and living with chronic conditions. Cloud computing, meanwhile, enables the delivery of “heavyweight” health care services and information to lightweight mobile devices, as well as the secure storage of personal patient information. Big data, too, has an important role to play, enabling individualized health care services and targeted wellness and prevention programs.

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devices and applications for remote monitoring, diagnosis and information access is one of the critical first steps toward a comprehensive mobile health care future.

Perspective on providers: expanding footprint

The days when medical services were confined to the four walls of a hospital are long gone. Today, increasing health care demand, public policy shifts and new technology megatrends are expanding medical information and care beyond the hospital door to wherever the patient happens to be. This paves the way for fewer “heads in beds” and patients empowered to better manage their own conditions. For example, a national UK telehealth trial remotely monitoring patients with chronic disease has shown reductions of 15% in emergency visits, 20% in emergency admissions, 14% in elective admissions, 14% in bed days and, ultimately, 45% in mortality rates.

Providers can benefit from new technology in several ways. Smart mobility enables them to treat patients at home and reach remote and underserved communities. Social networking gives them the opportunity to establish real-time interactive communications to engage more effectively with patients, whereas cloud computing allows them to network with other hospitals. Big data analytics helps them understand patterns of behavior in patient populations. As such, health care providers are gradually integrating smart mobility into patient care. Factors ranging from strong consumer and physician demand to providers’ own experiences and government incentives are all driving the increased adoption of mobile technology.

Perspective on payers: prodigious experimentation

Health care payers around the world are prodigiously experimenting with mobile devices, applications and programs. This is true whether the payer is a government, a government-backed insurer, a private insurer or an employer. The advantages are clear: smart mobility enables them to treat patients at home and reach remote and underserved communities. Social networking gives them the opportunity to establish real-time interactive communications to engage more effectively with patients, whereas cloud computing allows them to network with other hospitals. Big data analytics helps them understand patterns of behavior in patient populations. As such, health care providers are gradually integrating smart mobility into patient care. Factors ranging from strong consumer and physician demand to providers’ own experiences and government incentives are all driving the increased adoption of mobile technology.

Future perspective: meeting challenges

Governments worldwide recognize that the challenges before them are only mounting. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently reported that if dramatic new approaches are not implemented, government spending on health could reach an average of nearly 1.2% of GDP across the 34 OECD nations in 2060, up from 5.5% in the past decade. Some developing countries face steeper rises; the Chinese Government’s costs could reach 8.3% of GDP, up from 1.9% in the second half of the 2000s. While no panacea, health information technology is increasingly seen as one way to address these and other health care challenges.

Importantly, many of these technologies are ready to help now, within reach of 90% of the world’s population. Pilots are beginning to show how, with the right policies, incentives and investments, the public and private sectors can work together to help solve what may be society’s biggest challenge of this century.

For more information about the changing health care landscape and the opportunities and challenges that these changes present to users and providers of transformative, enabling technologies, read mHealth: mobile technology poised to enable a new era in health care, from EY’s Global Technology Center (GTC). The EY GTC encompasses a network of 15,000 technology practice professionals from across our global member firms, all sharing deep technical and industry knowledge.

Gary Homr is EY’s Global Health
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EY’s recently published Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders analyzes gender equality in public sector leadership around the world. But the story is constantly shifting and evolving. Our most recent research took place in May 2013 – what were the key findings?

Building a better working world for women

Who leads the public sector is important. Public sector leaders – politicians, civil servants and board members – are responsible for the general welfare of their citizens and give protection to the most vulnerable members of society. Diversity, too, is crucial, because diverse teams are proven to stimulate innovation and new ways of problem solving. Unfortunately, there is an increasing acknowledgment that much work remains to be done before governments and business become truly representative of the societies they serve. This is why EY, in conjunction with Dods, recently examined the representation of women in leadership roles in the G20 countries. Our Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders highlights issues of gender equality at senior leadership levels in the public sector, and will form part of a series of regular reports designed to track progress and change in governments, promoting gender equality amongst the leadership of the public service across the globe.

Women make up 51% of the population, and in Canada, the No.1 ranked country on our index, they account for 45% of its public sector leaders. However, our survey showed that only four G20 countries reached even a third of representation of women in leadership roles, despite women constituting a significant part of the overall public sector workforce in many countries.

In May 2013, EY sent the Index, together with a fresh set of survey questions, to public sector leaders around the world in order to help design the wider annual research campaign and gain extra qualitative responses. We received nearly 1,500 results, of whom 80% were female and 20% male.

Alternative action to quotas

Respondents were asked what alternative actions to quotas they would recommend in order to promote the representation of women across the public sector leadership in their country. The graph below details the top 12 most frequently cited themes for alternative action.

Obstacles to overcome

We also asked our respondents to identify the most important obstacles, if any, that need to be overcome to be able to achieve gender equality across the public sector leadership in their country. The following graph sets out the top 12 most frequently cited themes.

Effectively addressing the gender deficit in the public sector will be an ongoing challenge. There are clearly many voices in this debate, and many methods with which governments can seek to restore a greater gender balance in their leadership ranks. EY is actively participating in this debate and will be producing an updated Index in early 2014. In the meantime, please join us at ey.com/government/womenleiders to be inspired by the lives and ideas of some public sector women leaders who have joined us in this global initiative. You can also join the network on LinkedIn and follow us on Twitter @globalgovwomen.