Global Agenda Council on Digital Health 2012-2014

Understanding/Context

The transformational power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) drives digital health, much the way it does other industries such as banking and retail. However, it is only now that using and adopting ICTs in healthcare is gaining momentum. Today's burgeoning digital health technology sector is encouraging, as health-related data can make a powerful impact on the global health landscape by improving the safety, efficiency and quality of healthcare. One of the biggest innovations is the ability to deliver more data to consumers through mobile, social and Web applications. Shared data can empower individuals to make more informed decisions concerning their health and can be a tool for increased patient engagement, thus becoming a critical area of focus and need. In addition to advantages for both practitioners and patients, digital health presents many social and economic benefits including cost savings, increasing the productivity and efficiency of populations, creating jobs and sustainability, and improving the use of health resources.

However, the widespread adoption and implementation of digital health technology faces several challenges. First, financial issues accompany the introduction of new technology as it is a costly process. Information about the return on investment of such activities is scarce. Second, policies and regulations are needed, particularly in the management of personal data, which is important for trustworthy and reliable data sharing. Progress has been made in the area of privacy and security, but the challenge now is how to use data to address the issues rather than limit action due to security concerns. Finally, while many digital health efforts already exist, there is little sharing of best practices. With countries at different levels of development, communicating the successes and failures of digital health initiatives is valuable in driving progress.

Shaping the Agenda

The Global Agenda Council on Digital Health is working to address some of these issues by producing a knowledge commons that includes a toolkit with recommendations and policies for digital health. It will be updated regularly and disseminated through the World Economic Forum's and Council Members' networks. The Council hopes the document can ensure that digital health is used effectively and meaningfully to address basic health challenges and serve the broader population.

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The Council would also like to be involved in shaping the health landscape at the World Economic Forum by creating and suggesting programming ideas for regional meetings. This would entail highlighting the importance of digital health technology in the most relevant regions and ensuring that regional meetings benefit from the expertise of the Network of Global Agenda Councils.

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