

Chapter 34

Pervasive Mobile Health

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ABSTRACT

Pervasive mobile health is mobile health that provides healthcare services that are accessible regardless of time and place where patients can continuously be connected through their smart mobile devices. It offers healthcare providers a more comprehensive perspective of patients' conditions and thus aids in achieving complex healthcare goal(s) such as building lasting relationships with patients. The service can be further extended to accommodate customers' participation in health and healthcare processes to improve healthcare services by extending roles of patients. The advancement of the web technologies, especially social networks, push e-health to embrace mobile devices (m-health) and personalize customer-centric services with a possibility to extend and improve services by enabling active participation of patients, patients' families, and the community at large in healthcare processes and personal health decision making. This chapter addresses some important concepts of m-health, challenges, future trends, and some related terminologies to provide a holistic view of m-health.

INTRODUCTION

Recent progress in mobile health (mHealth) is very encouraging as it allows healthcare services to be accessed through powerful smart mobile devices. Nowadays smart mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets support many features that can be utilized to access healthcare services conveniently. mHealth will indeed be a convenient experience to patients since there is currently a growing trend towards pervasive knowledge acquisition and management. Pervasive mHealth is an electronic health where healthcare services can be accessed regardless of time and place, and patients can continuously be connected to their healthcare services through their smart mobile devices.

According to Eysenbach (2011), healthcare services in mHealth are delivered through mobile devices. Pervasive mHealth provides services that go beyond traditional healthcare services. It provides various services accessible through smart mobile devices, including searching relevant health information, in-

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teractive discussion of healthcare matters with colleagues or friends, updating health related information from smart mobile devices, and seeking opinion through online healthcare services. Pervasive mHealth is becoming an increasingly important instrument in healthcare services for the public.

Most healthcare initiatives perceive patients as recipients of healthcare, where they hardly have roles in the process of healthcare activities and decision-making. For example, it is difficult for a patient to get access to his/her own health record or to find out his/her health history. On the other hand, the advancement of mobile technology has given customer (patients) a greater role in the process including the ability to gain access and control of information flow that fits their personalized needs. In terms of healthcare activities, many smart electronic devices have enabled patients to check their own health condition without assistance from healthcare staffs such as checking blood pressure, food hygiene Apps, mobile thermometer, mobile glucose measurement, mobile hypertension tool, etc.

In addition, the wide adoption of smartphones and tablets as well as the emerging of their utilization in healthcare raises the possibility to engage patients, patients' families, and society to participate in their own healthcare processes. For instance, social networking, which is accessible through smartphones, can provide an avenue to identify any misuse or misunderstanding in consuming antibiotics, share health information, promote positive behavior change, disseminate valid information, and explore how such tools can be used to gather real-time health data (Scanfeld et al., 2010). Pervasive mHealth can offer healthcare providers a comprehensive perspective of patient's condition and thus provide an environment in achieving complex healthcare goal(s) such as building lasting relationships with patients. The main goal of this chapter is to accommodate the concept of pervasive mHealth scenario within pervasive knowledge acquisition in healthcare systems. We propose a pervasive mHealth model that extends to multi-channel knowledge resources in mHealth. The model is designed to establish longitudinal healthcare services anytime and anywhere which in turn will raise health literacy of individuals and the community at large.

BACKGROUND

Currently almost every healthcare organization depends on information and communication technology (ICT) in every level of their activities. One of the most valued aspects of ICT is its capability to enhance processes or functions to improve consistency, accuracy, and efficiency. Similarly, efficient and effective healthcare services have become increasingly dependent on accurate and detailed clinical information, which is transferred from interrelated departments or even between organizations (Conrick, 2006). In addition, people's demands have changed because they have been empowered by the vast amount of information available and accessible to them through smart mobile devices, including mHealth related services (Anshari et al., 2013). For example, half of smartphone owners in US use their devices to get health information and one fifth of smartphone owners have health-related apps (Fox & Duggan, 2012). Despite some limitations of smartphones (Koushanfar et al., 2000), they can be used as services platform for mobile health information delivery, access and communication (Nkosi et al., 2010).

Rapid adoption of smartphones and smart mobile devices has removed the space, time and distance barriers for users, including the patients, to access information. In fact, smartphones facilitate the use of dynamic Web 2.0 and Apps allows intensive and immediate interactivity through social networks. In Web 2.0, users can collectively contribute contents and applications (O'Reilley, 2005). Web 2.0 is defined as a set of economic, social, and technology trend that collectively forms the basis for the next generation of Internet – a distinctive medium characterized by users' participation in using networks such

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