E-health vital in battle against heart disease say European cardiology leaders

August 25 2015

E-health is vital to winning the battle against heart disease, European cardiology leaders said today in a European Society of Cardiology (ESC) position paper published in *European Heart Journal*. The novel paper outlines how the ESC will exploit e-health in education and research, while tackling issues of quality control and data security.

By 2017 more than 3 billion people worldwide will own a smartphone and half will use health Apps.

"Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a central role in helping us make decisions in almost every aspect of life including what to buy and where to travel, and patients are often frustrated that healthcare does not keep pace," said lead author Professor Martin R. Cowie, professor of cardiology at Imperial College London and the Royal Brompton Hospital in London, UK.

He added: "ICT has the potential to personalise healthcare, help patients take more responsibility for their own health, and cut down on costly hospital stays. The ESC sees e-health as vital to achieving its mission of reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe and will take a proactive role in developing, assessing and implementing ICT innovations to support cardiovascular health."

E-health refers to the use of ICT in healthcare services, surveillance, education, training and research. Examples are mobile applications (Apps) for monitoring physiological signs such as blood pressure,

telemedicine for remote monitoring of patients with heart failure, electronic medical records, e-prescribing, e-referrals, decision support systems for physicians, and disease registries.

The ESC's medium term action plan is to:

- Facilitate wider implementation of e-health
- Educate and train ESC members in the appropriate use of e-health
- Discuss regulation and quality control (including benchmarks) with relevant organisations
- Participate in societal and political discussions on data security and confidentiality
- Support research into the development, evaluation and implementation of e-health technologies
- Promote policy dialogue at local, national and international levels with governments, regulators, payers, professional bodies, citizens, patients, healthcare professionals and industry
- Provide information for European citizens on the risks and benefits of e-health applications.

"By 2017 more than 3 billion people worldwide will own a smartphone and half of them will be using health Apps,"2 said Professor Cowie. "But professional organisations have largely ignored this area of health and lifestyle decision making. There is no global approach to regulation of health Apps and consumers can be misled into purchasing a technology that is less beneficial than advertised."

"More clarity is needed on data protection issues, confidentiality and legal liability of developers and service providers," he continued. "The ESC is keen to work with all stakeholders – consumer and patient organisations, health professionals and organisations, public authorities, App developers, telecommunication service providers, mobile device

manufacturers, and others – to optimise the design and implementation of new technologies for cardiovascular health."

The position paper highlights the ESC's key deliverables in e-health. The ESC will take the lead on making e-health an essential part of educational events. The ESC curriculum and syllabus will be updated to include e-health in the knowledge and skills required by cardiologists and other healthcare professionals.

E-health will become a core part of the ESC's research activities. The ESC will support and encourage its members to conduct research to develop ICT solutions, improve inter-operability and evaluate health and healthcare impact and value for money. A summit will be organised for relevant stakeholders to develop criteria for evaluating technologies, and develop guidelines for the design of e-health trials.

Professor Cowie said: "Patients and cardiologists need to know whether a new ICT solution is worth using and we will assist with this, for example by providing reviews of technologies, including Apps, conducted by our members. E-health is a rapidly moving field and we want to maximise its potential to improve cardiovascular health and prevent cardiovascular disease."

More information: "e-health: a position statement of the European Society of Cardiology." *European Heart Journal.* 2015; doi:ehv416/15-00374

Provided by European Society of Cardiology