

ESC on eHealth revolution: A new vision for cardiovascular medicine

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How are smartphones and computer programs transforming healthcare, especially when it comes to preventing, diagnosing and treating heart disease? That's the focus of a collection of articles published today in the *European Heart Journal (EHJ)*.

Called eHealth, it includes smartphone applications that can predict a patient's worsening heart failure simply from the sound of a person's voice, or an app that warns someone walking down a street that blood pressure or glucose levels are dangerously low. There are mobile apps for doctors in the clinic that provide computerised decision support systems.

There's even Big Data that analyses millions of patient records to understand what cardiovascular treatments are having the greatest impact in specific situations, or how the results from one country compare to the results in others.

"Our profession and its use of electronic information is changing rapidly" said Professor Jeroen Bax, president of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). "Cutting-edge technologies are providing medical insights like never before."

The ESC has representatives working with the European Commission's Expert groups on eHealth to ensure the interests of cardiovascular professionals and their patients are well represented. The ESC sees eHealth as vital to achieving its mission of reducing the burden of

cardiovascular disease and allowing people to live longer, healthier lives.

Professor Martin Cowie, professor of cardiology at the National Health and Lung Institute at Imperial College London, and coordinator of the ESC eHealth Unit, said remote access and personal monitoring would enable heart patients to gather their own data.

"eHealth is truly a revolution for health and healthcare. It's one of the most exciting changes we have seen in decades. It can help empower a person living with a medical condition," said Professor Cowie. "People don't have to go to hospital to receive input. They can collect information at home or even when they are out and about pursuing their daily activities and those data can help doctors make better and more timely decisions with them."

On Big Data, IBM created the cutting-edge technology platform Watson that can help a physician diagnose a medical complaint by combing through more than a million textbooks and scientific abstracts within seconds. "We are a catalyst to translate [big data](#) to empower doctors so they can take more time with their patients," said Dr. Kyu Rhee, chief health officer at IBM.

He added: "For a cardiologist who has ten to fifteen minutes with a patient, they often find they have a large medical record with multiple chronic conditions and issues. This is not about replacing physicians. It is about augmenting their intelligence at the point of care so they can focus on their relationships."

Social media is creating its own exciting opportunities for physicians and patients to communicate with each other.

But some physicians warn that it comes with definite risks: patients do not always distinguish between "right" and "wrong" information on

[social media](#). This requires experts, according to one of the EHJ articles - cardiologists who are able to make this distinction, correct inaccurate information and lead patients in the right direction.

More information: Martin R. Cowie et al, e-Health: a position statement of the European Society of Cardiology, *European Heart Journal* (2016). [DOI: 10.1093/eurheartj/ehv416](https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehv416)

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