Recent technological advances enabled by Big Data and patient-centred smart health applications were some of the main innovative solutions for health and care professionals presented at the Digital Health and Care Congress 2015 hosted by The King’s Fund in London, UK.

**WITH A FOCUS** on empowering patients and supporting improvements across health and social care services, the Digital Health and Care Congress 2015 brought together academia, policy makers and industry representatives from the UK and across the globe. Over the course of the two-day event, which took place in the heart of the West End, delegates had a chance to find out about novel digital applications and products, and hear from and question speakers on current National Health Services (NHS) strategies in the UK.

The 500 attendees included the NHS, local governments, academic institutions, the third sector, commercial providers, digital health startups, entrepreneurs and innovators – all keen to learn about exciting digital health technology, research and innovative service delivery methods that are having a positive impact on care providers and patients.

Alongside opportunities for delegates, speakers and exhibitors to network, the congress also featured rapid fire poster sessions, a new way of exhibiting called the Innovation hub and case studies on areas such as self-care hubs, digital support for carers and ways to support the needs of different patient groups.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

Richard Pantlin, Association of Directors of Adult Social ServicesProgramme Manager for Engaging Citizens Online and Care Act Informatics, summarises his presentation at the Congress.

Adult social care in England is facing increasing demand due to the ageing population and also the effects of the Care Act at a time of real cuts in funding. From April 2016, nearly half a million more people will have an incentive to contact their council for a Care Account. These will be more affluent than existing social care clients. They and their carers will have higher expectations for online transacting at times to suit them.

Many councils are already making strides in this direction. The King’s Fund presentation sets out examples for online information and advice, carers’ assessments, means testing and access to Care Accounts.
STRATEGIES FOR PERSONALISED HEALTHCARE

Key speaker at the Digital Health and Care Congress 2015 and leader of the information revolution agenda for NHS England, Beverly Bryant, Director of Digital Technology, talked about plans to enable patient-centred care through technology.

“Everything we’re doing around driving forward digital technologies in health and care is underpinned by a strategy. In NHS England’s Five-Year Forward View, the Government has now committed to working with us to implement over the next five years [...] the National Information Board (NIB) strategy we published in November. These are business strategies, they’re how we’re going to make transformational change to care, underpinned by technology, and not a technology strategy in themselves that sits over on the edge. [...] The NIB is coming together across health and social care, with lots of national and local organisations pulling together. [...] Here are just eight areas we’ve committed to. These eight areas have really come from research that was done about five years ago, through the Power of Information strategy and other bits of work. Although they’re quite exciting, [...] we felt that actually we just need to test these before we move forward over the next five years. So, in the last six months, we’ve engaged with a wide range of organisations, we’ve had workshops and conversations, we’ve done literature reviews and surveys, and we’ve tested whether or not those ideas from five years ago were still a good idea. It’s been a really good engagement with members of the public, and again, many of the organisations. [...] The Five-Year Forward View talked about new models of care, [...] the demographic pressures of an ageing population and self-care empowerment. For example, we know that many [general practitioner] GP appointments are for minor ailments, and the public have told us if there was a way they could find out what to do through their pharmacy or through online services, they wouldn’t go to the GP. That would free up GP time, and make it more convenient for them. And on productivity and efficiency, again, the detail will come out as part of our roadmap that we’ll publish. [...] Of all the public’s preferences – consistent time of response, personalisation, making it easy to self-serve, etc. – the multichannel offer is the thing they want most. We will always make it possible for people to meet with clinicians face to face, to have telephone contact, but they’re saying it would also be good to be signposted and given information, building on the success of NHS Choices [...] This is good news for us, because we hoped that would be the case and, of course, we now have evidence to support it.”
REDESIGNING CARE PATHWAYS

Founder and Executive Director, Robin Vickers, outlines how Digital Life Sciences delivers integrated digital healthcare services for patients

**Your team at Digital Life Sciences (DLS) works in partnership with health and social care providers. Can you explain how your services enable a more patient-centred approach?**

DLS works with users and stakeholders of health and social care services to redesign care pathways with the use of digital technologies. This design process is centered on users, starting with understanding their needs and building systems and tools that respond to those needs.

**Could you highlight any of DLS’ notable success stories?**

In 2013, Vitality formed a partnership with Digital Life Sciences. The companies shared a vision for improved patient access, using a digital model of care placing multidisciplinary health and social care teams around the patient through the creation of a Health Hub. In October of that year, the partnership won almost £1 million from the Prime Minister’s Challenge Fund and, in October 2014, was cited as an example of the new Multispecialty Community Provider care model in NHS England’s Five-Year Forward View.

**What is ‘DLS Access’ and how does it facilitate patient access to primary care?**

DLS Access is a multi-channel model that allows patients to access their care professionals via the web, Skype, phone or smartphone app from wherever they are. With a re-engineered in-day service, the Health Hub now takes incoming patient calls for Vitality practices and schedules patients in for a remote general practitioner (GP) or advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) call back (via Skype or telephone, whichever the patient prefers) within an hour. Over 65 per cent of Vitality patients are now choosing to consult with their GPs in this way.

Using a new digital web estate [the Vitality version can be found at www.vitalitypartnership.net], Vitality patients who register for the online service can also get access to their own personalised care plan and, if required, prescribed condition-specific digital packages of care prescribed by their GP, using DLS Prescribe. They can also download a free app that enables them to find information on their registered GP surgery, and request a phone or Skype consultation from wherever they are.

All visitors to the Vitality website can view the Vitality Guides, which provide information about common ailments and conditions. There are 45 different video guides, which tackle the most routine reasons for visiting a GP, aiming to provide localised content, delivered by Vitality clinicians. As a result, patients have the answer they need without having to contact their GP. Currently, these guides have been accessed over 5,000 times.

In short, DLS Access has transformed the way in which Vitality patients are able to access their care. No longer do patients spend hours trying to get through to their local surgery or queuing outside for an appointment. Using DLS Access, patients can access their GP or ANP within an hour of calling.

**Finally, how important is the Digital Health and Care Congress to Digital Life Sciences’ endeavours? How would you summarise your presentation at this year’s event?**

We are delighted to have presented at this year’s Digital Health and Care Congress. The event is one of the most important in the digital health calendar and we are honoured to have showcased our solution in the plenary session. Our hope is that the presentation has shown industry what can be achieved through digital and business transformation, and how digital technologies can affect the future.

www.digitallifesciences.co.uk
SELF-CARE HUBS

Designed to enable patients to take charge of their own health and wellbeing, self-care hubs have been extensively trialled over recent years. In their address, Dr Maurice Smith, GP and Governing Body Member at Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group, and Beth Murphy, Service Manager at the Scottish Centre for Telehealth and Telecare, presented their two respective pilot hubs: More independent and Living it up

MORE INDEPENDENT

"I worked with Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to create this platform of common capabilities so that it can be used by multiple actors to give people the tools and information they need to self-care [...]. There are three capabilities I want to call out: 1) referrals, 2) health records and 3) verifying identities.

[...] The first application, if we're talking about referrals, is when someone has an appointment with a GP and they are at risk of falling over [...] or they are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes, we want to refer them to an appropriate provider – whether it's local or national – to help an individual manage that falls prevention programme or diabetes.

The second, is this idea of personal health records. Liverpool has really gone for this as the strategic part of the Platform [...]. They want to give people with diabetes the ability to manage that themselves with an application that talks to their personal health records.

It's personal health records that are connected to the strategy systems, so we can flow information out in a two-way manner.” [...]

www.moreindependent.co.uk

HEALTH HUBS

Sheena Guthrie, self-care hub analyst at Looking Local (part of Kirklees Council) talks about what constitutes an efficient hub

"It needs to be very easy to use and user friendly. The whole purpose of the hub is to direct traffic away from primary care services. And also, it enables people to interact and get a certain level of their care from other people other than going to their GP. It even allows clinicians the chance to have contact via the hub with a patient, so in a sense it makes the contact that patients have with clinicians a lot more efficient in itself, because the time that it takes to have that contact is considerably shorter compared to face-to-face contact. And also because a clinician can be given access to see what’s in your hub, they already, to some extent, have knowledge of what you're wanting to talk to them about.”

http://about.lookinglocal.gov.uk

www.kingsfund.org.uk/digitalhealth2015

LIVING IT UP

We worked in a large consortium – five local partnership areas ranging from the Western Isles – a rural community setting – down to Loudoun which has Edinburgh within it – quite a big urban population. We had a community and engagement team that was made up of the Health and Social Care Alliance – which is the Scottish version of National Voices – Care Scotland and also the Glasgow School of Art [...]

We have four key aspects to our service. The first is called Shine and that’s all about the ‘giving back’ element. That is linking people up with a short quiz to assess the areas they are interested in, what they are good at, [...] volunteering and also community information [...]. Discover is all about servicing retailers of local community services and support. Connect is really all about the technology – so digital upscaling tools and videos that can be used in libraries and upscaling classes, as well as information about telehealth/telecare. In the final section, Flourish is the meeting part of the website and that is essentially the self-care hub. So we’ve got good tools to track mood, to track activity, a whole range of things in that area, as well as health information that we’ve drawn from the NHS.

https://portal.livingitup.org.uk/