PwC PUBLISHED THEIR mHealth Insights series, complementing a report entitled ‘Emerging mHealth: Paths of growth’. In this series, PwC outlines six different principles that drive the adoption of mobile health applications: integration, interoperability, intelligence, socialisation, outcomes and engagement. Among these, intelligence is the ability of software to do what people were doing before.

When we look at using software and devices in a mobile environment, we try to find a way to heighten productivity, so that a doctor or nurse doesn’t have to be with you 24/7, 365 days a year to help implement healthier behaviours that lead to better outcomes. We can do that through software applications, which might have thousands of algorithms – forms of artificial intelligence that replicate the guidance or interaction that a physician or nurse would give you if they were with you at that very time, to help you understand what you should eat, what behaviours you should have, how active you should be, your sleeping patterns and how they should be managed, the drugs that you should be taking, and when you should be taking them.

However, we can’t change behaviours if we don’t have the intelligence of gathering and interpreting the information and providing specific directions to patients in real time with regard to what they should be doing to get better health outcomes.

Technology is an enabler. It’s a tool that allows us to practice medicine in a different way. The key to changing behaviours and improving health outcomes is to figure out how we leverage this technology to practice medicine in a more productive and effective manner than we have in the past. This is critical because, if you look at the demographics of every country, both emerging as well as developed, we do not have enough doctors and nurses, nor do we have the capability to produce enough doctors and nurses, to deliver healthcare in the same mode as we’ve done in the past. There just aren’t enough people or schools.

This text is an abridged transcription from PwC’s mHealth Insights series. For the full video and others, visit: http://pwc.to/1Ik4g5G

THE GROWING NEED FOR MHEALTH

In 1980 in the US, there were on average 10 patients for every healthcare worker and only about 8 per cent of GDP was spent on healthcare. There were virtually no shortages of doctors or nurses. In 2020, however, the landscape will look quite different. By then, the US will be spending over 20 per cent of GDP on healthcare, will have an 800,000 person shortfall in doctors and nurses, and may accommodate three patients per healthcare provider. Such a state is unsustainable. Yet, by applying intelligent healthcare tools, applications and devices through mHealth, and empowering patients to self-help, the US healthcare system will get the support necessary to transform healthcare into a much higher productive state.