

The global health sector is going through a revolution: Digital health is allowing patients to take control of their health and social care needs. The phenomenon is called patient empowerment, and Stockholm has emerged as a hub for new research, cutting edge startups and inquisitive citizens.

The Swedish capital will host the Digital Health Days conference on September 23-24, in which some of the world's most influential individuals and companies in digital health will outline how digital solutions can make healthcare more sustainable and user friendly.

One of the speakers is Kim Min-Sung, partner at the Berlin-based venture capital company XLHEALTH. He said digital health is the greatest and most meaningful opportunity of our lifetime.

"Entrepreneurs in this field are improving life quality and helping to find sustainable and smart IT solutions," he said. "We love the outstanding quality of digital health mobile apps, services and products from Stockholm.

Digital Health can reduce healthcare costs and significantly improve the individual management of chronic diseases.

"For us, healthcare is people-centered, and informed people make better health choices. We support companies that foster people in simply having fun in actively shaping their health," said Kim.

"We see great potential in Nordic startups," he added. "Therefore we are very excited to explore further investment opportunities in that region."

Swedes have garnered a reputation as early adopters of new technologies, and digital health services are no different.

Indeed, a new report by PWC said more than 40 percent of Swedes surveyed were positive about the possibility of using virtual care solutions, such as seeing their doctor by video. As many as 74 percent would be prepared to have their heart remotely monitored at home through a wireless solution.

Anna Omstedt Lindgren, an internet veteran and co-founder of Tasteline and MedUniverse, said Stockholm is entrepreneur friendly and hosts some of the most exciting tech start-ups which results in access to good people, venture capital and lots of inspiration.

“Stockholm is glocal. We can make business on a local level and still have access to global accounts based on the services we do here,” she said.

During the event, Omstedt Lindgren will talk about how digital revolution has had a major and broad impact on many industries.

“Digital health allows for sharing in a whole different way than analogue services could ever deliver upon,” she said. “Our digital patient case software at MedUniverse allows for the pharma industry to effectively reach doctors and nurses and thus indirectly helping patients get the latest news and access to drug therapy development.”

One of the experts who was previously a speaker at Digital Health Day also happens to be a patient. Sara Riggare was diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson’s disease when she was just 32. Although her neurologist prescribed medication, she was always the one who made sure to take it, eat healthily and stay physically active. It made her an expert in self-care.

She has used that experience of self-monitoring in her research as a doctoral student in health informatics at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. She said the aim of digital health is not to make care cheaper, but more cost-efficient. If more people can take responsibility for their own health with new technology and services then resources can be made available to those who can’t.

Riggare said patient empowerment technology is becoming more user-friendly and flexible. She

also noticed a drift towards “quantified self”, a movement where people measure everyday activities to improve their quality of life.

Other speakers on show at this year’s Digital Health Days include Brian Goldman, who is well known for his TED talk about doctors making mistakes and his crusade for better patient safety. He’s joined by Bill Crounse, senior director of Worldwide Health at Microsoft, Lucien Engelen from Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre and Jeroen Tas, CEO of Healthcare Informatics Solutions and Services at Philips.

Speeches aren’t the only options open to this year’s delegates. There will also be pitches by European startups, Venture Capital panels, demos and hands-on workshops on design thinking and patient involvement, as well as announcements of winners of scientific awards and new company collaborations.

The aim at the end is to inspire those attending to make digital health solutions a reality across the entire world, for the good of mankind.

“The opportunities digitalization offers to improve healthcare and curb escalating costs may be obvious, but actually developing and implementing sustainable solutions whereby these opportunities can benefit the individual patient and society is another matter altogether,” said the events manager Nima Jokilaakso.

Patient representatives will get free tickets to attend Digital Health Days.

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