

With a long-standing reputation for innovation in both medical technology and mobile communication, Stockholm has emerged as a vital region for mobile healthcare.□



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Smartphones and mobile applications are poised to play a greater role in healthcare as doctors and patients embrace the mobile Internet to treat chronic illnesses and improve quality of life. With a rapidly ageing population; increasing rate of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease; and curbs on government spending in many countries, demand for mobile healthcare (m-health) is booming across the world.

"This is an extremely fascinating industry with a massive growth potential", said Lars Bratsberg, an independent consultant with 25 years of mobile communications experience at Sony Ericsson and Ericsson. "This will create new companies, new jobs, new investments and be an important export industry."

With m-health solutions, medical information can be sent between hospitals and patients in real time. For example, self-monitoring system for diabetics can send data to doctors and care staff. Also, people with sleeping disorders could use a wireless device to monitor their sleep patterns and transmit data to their doctors. Today, mobile health applications are most commonly used for fitness and workout programs, nutrition and gathering health news, according to a study by Park Associates.

Stockholm – the birthplace of both the pacemaker and the smartphone – offers a unique business and science environment for m-health companies, and has the potential to be one of the world's leading centers for this emerging industry, said Ylva Hultman-Erlandsson, a Life Science Business Development Manager at Stockholm Business Region.

"By tradition Stockholm has been a frontrunner in medtech innovations. It is also one of the leading regions in the world when it comes to mobile communication and the connection between hardware and software", she said. "There is walking distance between medtech and telecom competences in Stockholm."

From small innovative startups through to the world's largest maker of wireless networks, Ericsson, Stockholm comprises a range of companies that have roots in science parks and innovation networks at universities and research institutes, like the Karolinska Institute and KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

Testing market

Many foreign companies come to Stockholm to test their products, Ylva Hultman-Erlandsson said, pointing out that many people here are early adopters and keen to try out new technology. A shining example being Danderyd Sjukhus Innovation, a unit at one of the region's biggest hospitals that offers product and clinical evaluations, where companies can test ideas and new products in close collaboration with the hospital's clinics.

Global sales to expand

Berlin-based research group research2guidance have forecasted that mobile and healthcare services will expand rapidly to reach 500 million mobile users, or about 30 percent of an estimated 1.4 billion smartphone subscribers worldwide by 2015. The group said that currently there are more than 17,000 mobile health applications designed for smartphones globally, with many aimed at health care professionals

There aren't yet any potential sales figures for Sweden, but in the United States alone, revenue from digital health technology could exceed 5.7 billion dollars in 2015, compared with 1.7 billion in 2010, according to a report issued by research company Parks Associates. Seventy-one percent of American physicians consider a smartphone essential to their practice, and 84 percent said that the Internet is critical to their jobs, according to a study by Manhattan Research.

Some Swedish m-health companies:

- Ericsson Mobile Health offers a solution for remote patient monitoring, supporting measurement of medical parameters like ECG, spirometry, blood pressure, pulse rate and oxygen saturation in predefined intervals and duration, described by the company as "a crossbreed of the latest mobile information and communications technologies and healthcare".
- Ortivus, a company with 30 employees and listed on the Stockholm stock exchange, offers

systems that ensure patients get accurate medical treatment and expertise instantly throughout the care process.

- Zenicor Medical Systems was founded in 2003 and today is one of Sweden's leading medical technology companies in remote cardiac diagnostics. The company is established in more than 80 hospitals in the Nordic region and has recently launched an export drive in Europe.
- Medipal, which develops mobile tools used by doctors and their patients to enhance the quality of medical care, was awarded the prestigious healthcare prize "Idea of the Year" in 2008.
- Kiwok, that plans an IPO this year, offers solutions that enable doctors and care personnel to receive the ECG of heart patients via the mobile network. (See separate article)
- American St. Jude Medical, a global medical device company, has established a research and development unit for its cardiac rhythm management division in Järfälla, and for its cardiovascular division in Uppsala.

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Stockholm a frontrunner in m-health

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