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Healthcare Technology: Now and in the Future

Daphne Stanford · Wednesday, April 5th, 2017

A number of technological advancements have prolonged lifespans for those who, 20 years ago, would not be privy to any options to speak of. One wild, unbelievable case in point is the possible [head transplant being planned](#) for Valery Spiridonov, a man who suffers from muscular atrophy and hopes that the operation will give him a chance at a normal life. If that Frankenstein of a story isn't impressive enough, let's take a look at a few more immediately-accessible technological breakthroughs that are changing the face of the healthcare world.

Mobile Health Apps

Remember when cordless phones were the new technology in the phone world? Unlike the days of land lines and home phones, most of us now own a smartphone and, furthermore, we rarely turn them off. [According to the University of Illinois at Chicago](#), a 2015 Pew Research Center report found that, of those who owned a cellphone, 90 percent said that they "frequently" carry their device on them and only 3 percent reported that they "rarely carry it." Also, the majority of cellphone users keep their phones turned on most of the time. This constant connectedness makes an idea like a blood pressure tracker via mobile app a logical way to track one's health.

To give a specific example, U.S. government psychologists developed an app called PTSD Coach in 2011 that was specially designed for use by military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. [The app was designed to be](#) a tool that would be immediately accessible, during distressful moments and acute stressors prompting symptoms. PTSD Coach was apparently downloaded 150,000 times in 86 different countries, and studies have shown that users were appreciative of its practicality. If you'd like to learn more about the app, you can download it [here](#).

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Wearable Technology

You've likely heard of wearable technology like the Fitbit and other heart rate monitors, for fitness purposes, but have you ever considered the use of wearable technology to gauge various aspects of your health? One possible indicator of health conditions like insomnia, sleep apnea, or [GERD](#) is the quality of your sleep. You could try wearing a [sleep monitor](#) to track the quality of your sleep and see if there are any correlations between sleep quality and diet, exercise, mood, or other symptoms.

Big Data

Although big data is tied, in some way, to all the technological breakthroughs already mentioned in this article, there's also the application of geographic information systems (GIS) mapping to track and visualize data related to outbreaks such as [the Zika virus](#). This technology allows epidemiologists and government officials to predict which areas may be affected next by tracking recent outbreak cases and connecting that data to current and future weather patterns, for example.

Telehealth

Because of the national shortage of mental health professionals, telecounseling is fast-becoming a viable solution—especially in more rural and less affluent areas of the country. [In fact](#), there are approximately 4,000 areas in the U.S. that have been designated as having a shortage: “one psychiatrist per 30,000 people.” As a result, secure video sessions are being offered in locations like Walgreens in order to increase access for more people in need of counseling and psychiatric care. Telecounseling sessions can also be conducted via phone—or even text, in some cases.

Augmented Reality

If you haven't heard of the [HoloLens](#) device, it's an educational tool that utilizes augmented reality to teach medical students anatomy lessons or better prepare them to perform surgery on a patient. The implementation of this technology has the potential of saving medical schools a great deal of money that is ordinarily spent on cadavers, preserving chemicals, and other supplies. Case Western Reserve University is [working with the device](#) to further develop it and getting the IT that it needs to be able to support it.

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What are some promising forms of medical technology that you've used or heard of? Share your experiences in the comments section, below!

Image Source: Intel Free Press

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