

1 **Meet my Data**

2 A hacking cough; a high temperature; a swollen knee. At one time, such **symptoms** would have sent you running –
3 or limping – to your GP. Today, of course, the internet is often the first port of call.

4 As the amount of health information has exploded online, people are **embracing** the opportunity to play medical
5 investigator. For some, it's a chance to **satisfy** their inner "cyberchondriac". For others, new digital devices offer
6 the chance to monitor their health more **closely** than ever before. All in all, access to information has put more
7 power into people's hands.

8 But medical professionals, pressed for time and **resources**, can't always **engage** with their patients in this way,
9 **particularly** if the enormous quantity of information is less than **accurate**. Could technology help make life easier
10 for doctors, while at the same time giving patients the chance to become effective **collaborators** in their own care?

11 There's no question that British people are keen to learn more about their well-being: one in 20 Google searches is
12 **related to** health, and the NHS's health information website regularly **receives** over 11 million visits a week.

13 A large number of people are already **collecting** their own data. According to the 2015 Picture of Health Report
14 from Philips, almost one in 10 people in the UK, including one in five 18 to 24-year-olds, have used wearable
15 devices, smartphones and apps to **track** their weight, sleep **patterns** and physical activity, among other things.

16 These people are often eager to share their data with their doctors: 39 per cent of people tracking their health with
17 a digital **device** say they show that information to their healthcare **provider**, according to the Picture of Health
18 Report.

19 But what does this mean for doctors? Naturally, there are **concerns** about misleading information. Web-based
20 "symptom checkers", which many people use to **determine** their **condition** for themselves, listed the correct
21 diagnosis only one-third of the time, according to research by Harvard Medical School, published in July 2015 in
22 the *BMJ*.

23 When it comes to monitoring personal health data, the question is whether the data **captured** is actually **relevant**.
24 "The real problem is that people are wasting their time on the web in a lot of **cases**," says GP Andrew Farmer, who
25 is also a specialist in diabetes and telemedicine at the University of Oxford. "It's not going to **contribute** to any
26 changes in their healthcare management."

27 That problem is compounded by worries about **accuracy**. A February 2015 study in the *Journal of the American*
28 *Medical Association*, for instance, found that wearable devices are no better at counting steps than smartphones.

29 As a result, two in five healthcare providers worry that in turning to the internet for medical treatment patients are
30 creating, rather than solving, problems.

31 Meanwhile, doctors are **dealing with** their own **challenges** during each consultation. Their patients' health records
32 may be divided across several different care providers, leaving them with **inadequate** information to go on. The
33 NHS has **set out** to create a centralised healthcare record system by 2018. "Without access to a record, there are
34 going to be challenges in **identifying** and providing the right **services**, unless the doctor knows the patient's
35 history," says Karen Taylor, a digital health expert at Deloitte UK.

36 Might there be an easier way? Philips is **exploring** a solution by combining digital monitoring technology with an
37 **online platform** on which patients can easily share their data with their doctor. The cloud-based system, called the
38 Philips HealthSuite Digital Platform, brings together all of a patient's medical data, **including** information from
39 a network of **connected** digital devices such as weighing scales, blood glucose sensors and blood-pressure
40 monitors.

41 In addition to giving the clinician a medical view of the patient's vital **signs** over time, the HealthSuite Digital
42 Platform devices could provide a way for patients to understand their own health and well-being. Research
43 **suggests** that such **remote** digital-monitoring systems can help engage patients in effective self-management.

44 Doctors would welcome a more efficient system. Over half of medical professionals are eager for technologies that
45 harness patient data to improve **outcomes** and coordinate care, according to the Picture of Health Report. "Such
46 technology is not taking the place of healthcare professionals," says Taylor. "It's actually **releasing** them from the
47 more bureaucratic aspects of their jobs, allowing them to better **fulfill** their important role."