Wearables Weekly

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April 11, 2016

Although the broader tech industry is experiencing financial constraints, reports from Rock Health and StartUp Health indicate that digital health funding continues to grow in 2016. Another story recounts the use of Fitbit data in the emergency room, highlighting the importance of accurate data as wearables make their move into healthcare. Read the latest below!

First quarter brings in between $980M and $1.8B digital health funding

Rock Health and StartUp Health have released their quarterly funding reports on digital health. Rock Health reported $981.3 million in funding for the first quarter of 2016, while StartUp Health reported $1.8 billion. Rock Health's number is lower due to more specific inclusion criteria and only tracking deals above $2 million. For example, the biggest deal of the quarter in StartUp Health's report was Oscar Health's $400 million deal. Rock Health did not include Oscar in its report, likely because the company is a health insurance company and does not fit Rock Health's definition for a health tech startup. According to Rock Health, the two largest deals this quarter were Flatiron's $175 million and Jawbone's $165 million. Startup Health noted several trends in funding, including more nuanced investors making deals, a decrease in deal volume but an increase in funding, and New York taking the lead for most deals.

Importance: There have been many reports that tech is experiencing a correction and VCs are being more cautious. However, digital health seems to be weathering the storm with Rock Health reporting a 50 percent growth in funding year over year.

42 percent of digital health consumers say knowing their numbers is top motivator

According to a survey of 500 insured consumers, 42 percent of individuals who use mobile health applications or devices said knowing their numbers is the biggest motivator to use digital health tools. Other motivators included improving health, accountability, and incentives. Of the users surveyed, half used fitness apps, 46 percent used a food and nutrition app, 39 percent used a weight loss app, and 38 percent reported using a wearable activity tracking device. A smaller portion of participants reported using healthcare tools, including pharmacy apps (28 percent), patient portals (22 percent), blood pressure apps (18 percent), and a symptoms navigator (14 percent).

Importance: This survey underscores the importance of presenting health data to users. Vitality's Guidelines for Personalized Health Technology include guiding interpretation of health data, with special considerations for varied levels of health literacy.

Doctors Used an ER Patient's Fitbit Data to Figure Out Treatment

According to a case report published in the Annals of Emergency Medicine, ER doctors used Fitbit data to choose a treatment for a 42-year-old man who had a seizure at work, possibly saving his life. The key issue in this case was whether the patient's irregularly high and erratic heartbeat was chronic or episodic. Doctors were considering using electrocardioversion (a low-voltage electric current to reset heart rhythm) to address his rapid heartbeat, but this treatment is generally only administered if the arrhythmia onset occurred within the last 48 hours because of complication risks for chronic patients. The doctors used the Fitbit data to establish the arrhythmia began 3 hours before presentation, and thus considered the patient a candidate for this treatment.

Importance: This published case study is indicative of the continued migration of wearables into the clinical sphere and highlights why it is crucial for wearables to be accurate, even if their intended use is not clinical.

Other Health Technology Headlines

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