

Chapter 4

Technologies for Participatory Wellbeing: A Consumer Health Analysis of the Ongoing Scientific Debate

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ABSTRACT

The participatory health revolution is shaping consumers' health behaviors that are increasingly influenced by people's desire to play an active role in promoting a positive life functioning. Technologies are addressing the emerging needs of the participatory health, as they favor a proactive users' attitude. This chapter describes the results of a software-assisted quali-quantitative study aimed at exploring the scientific debate about technological interventions for wellbeing in the era of participatory health. Based on the study's results, technologies for wellbeing in the participatory health era may be clustered depending on the "context of delivery," on their degree of personalization," and on their inner "conceptualization of positive interventions". According to a consumer health engagement perspective, those technologies are not mutually exclusive but can coexist based on the specific wellness needs and health engagement expectations of their users.

INTRODUCTION

We are assisting to a radical shift in the health conceptualization, more linked to a positive approach to wellness and life that is strongly influencing people's expectations of health and care services. Indeed, a new set of values is framing healthcare services and their demand. New values are changing the criteria for assessing services received, affecting clients' decision-making and satisfaction post fruition. These values are determined by the people's desire to take an active role in building the best health and wellness benefits experiences and promoting a positive life and health functioning (Riva et al., 2012). This phenomenon, known as "participatory health," constitutes an actual revolution in shaping consumers' health behaviours (Graffigna, Barelo, & Triberti, 2015; Phillips et al., 2014). This shift has followed the trends of increasing consumerism (Greener, 2012), significant technological breakthroughs in health and care (Street, Gold, & Manning, 2013), and revolutionary transformation in information gathering using the Internet (Cline & Haynes, 2001). New and different contexts and targets are shaping the use and design of technologies, and new and varied consumers' needs and expectations for participation are modeling them. Consequently, in this introductory section, we briefly provide an outlook of the ways in which new positive technological solutions are boosting and supporting a new demand for participatory wellbeing. Indeed, as presented in the following sections, we are moving towards a changing healthcare landscape, where health is increasingly assuming a new and wider conceptualization and value, and consumers are increasingly asking for a more active participation in health and care choices. In this sense, we conclude the introduction by introducing a consumer health engagement perspective as roadmap to properly analyse the societal movements towards the use of technologies to meet the needs of consumers' participation in health and wellbeing experiences.

Moving from these premises discussed in the following paragraphs, and by considering a consumer health perspective of analysis, this chapter tries to systematize the scientific and applicative debate about the delivery of technologies for wellbeing in the era of participatory health. The aim is to provide an integrated overview of the features of various technologies aimed at achieving wellbeing/wellness and to offer a critical overview of the ways in which the active role of individuals in these interventions is depicted.

BACKGROUND

New Positive Technological Solutions: A Booster for a Participatory Wellbeing

Technologies are optimally accompanying and addressing the emerging needs of the participatory health due to their innate potential to favour a proactive attitude in their users (Kvedar, Coye, & Everett, 2014). Let us think about the effect of ICT on information seeking, social exchanges, and contents sharing. In recent years, a user-centered philosophy – where users are actively involved from the design to the technologies' delivery (Gulliksen et al., 2003) - has been gaining increasing attention in order to co-create highly personalized wellness experiences able to generate a nourishing mutual relationship between the user and the technological tool, and consequently between the user and the wellbeing goal. Particularly, it is well known that the use of new technologies has extraordinary potentialities in engaging individuals and patients. Indeed, technology modifies our experience of everyday tasks and activities, allows

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