The Human Factor in Health Technology

There may be “an app for that”, but before health administrators can introduce a new health care application, they need to see evidence “for that”. An April CMAJ article referred to a “Wild West” atmosphere in the medical applications sector, highlighting that many are developed by those with no medical background and are promoted with little, if any, study of their effectiveness.

Featured in the article was Dr. Joseph Cafazzo, IHPME associate professor and lead for the Centre for Global eHealth Innovation at UHN. He is among those promoting higher standards in the clinical study of new applications.

“Many new tools are being imagined but there is still a need to validate health technology and applications, just as researchers have always done with new drugs and therapies,” says Joseph. All the apps developed by the Centre for Global eHealth Innovation are evaluated prior to being introduced to patients.

The Centre is one of the few research institutes in the world devoted to eHealth. Their focus spans the full spectrum of healthcare, from hospitals to homes, from complex care to self-care, even global health equity issues.

“This is the future of health care – technologies that empower patients and caregivers to play a more active role in managing their condition. Health system leaders must be able to assess the effectiveness of new technologies and facilitate their implementation.”

Dr. Cafazzo is the Executive Director of Healthcare Human Factors, also part of UHN. The group applies human factors engineering to problems of healthcare delivery and patient safety.

“Health-care professionals operate within systems that include the physical setting, the organization, other team members, and equipment and technology,” says Joseph. “Human factors is the study of the way humans interact within these systems, and how this interaction affects health workers and the health and safety of patients.”

Dr. Cafazzo points out that thousands of patients are harmed in avoidable adverse events in Canadian hospitals every year. Studying human factors improves understanding of why adverse events occur and how they can be prevented. “The safety and success of new health technology depends on design and implementation, plus the human factors. These can vary from organization to organization and product to product.”

Both the Centre for Global eHealth Innovation and Healthcare Human Factors attract students and professionals from a wide range of medical, engineering, informatics, and design backgrounds, including health system scholars. “Patients are being provided with more of the information that clinicians have typically had, which empowers the patient and caregiver to do more for themselves,” he says. “Those who aspire to leadership positions and truly believe in patient-centred care will find tremendous opportunity to foster and design the health care system of the future.”

Kevin J. Leonard Award Launch

Tuesday, May 27th

The first Kevin J. Leonard Award will be presented on Tuesday, May 27, 2014 at the Centre for Global eHealth Innovation. The ceremony will be hosted by Centre Lead Dr. Joseph Cafazzo and his team.

The award was established through the passion and dedication of many individuals who were part of Kevin’s life. The award recognizes an outstanding IHPME graduate, masters or PhD, student whose work will engage and empower patients through the use of technology to become partners in their own healthcare; and who exemplifies the ideals and principles Kevin imparted in his life and career.
Nominate an IHPME Grad for the 2014 Leadership & Literary Awards

The two awards recognize excellence and celebrate those making significant contributions in the field of health policy, health management or health evaluation. Deadline for nomination is July 31, 2014. For more information and to make a nomination, please visit our website. 
http://www.ihpme.utoronto.ca/about/alumni/awards.htm

Award recipients will be notified in early September and will be honoured at our Annual Recognition Dinner. For more information, please contact Corinne Berenstein by email at corinne.berenstein1@utoronto.ca

PUBLISHED WORKS

Scott D. Halpern and Allan S. Detsky published Graded Autonomy in Medical Education — Managing Things That Go Bump in the Night in the New England Journal of Medicine, March 20, 2014

IHPME PhD student Carolina Cancelliere is part of the group which has published Results of the International Collaboration on Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Prognosis, Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Volume 95, Issue 3, March 2014

THESIS DEFENCE

Robert Varadi, MDCM, Beta Blocker Use and Morbidity from Chronic Lung Disease in Patients Undertaking Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Congratulations to award winners

Emily Seto has received an NSERC 2014 Discovery Grant for her research into Methods for Development of Optimized Complex Expert Systems. Discovery Grants support ongoing programs of research with long-term goals and recognize the creativity and innovation that are at the heart of all research advances.

Dr. Murray Krahn has received the Dr. Jill M. Sanders Award of Excellence in Health Technology Assessment from CADTH. The award recognizes and celebrates individuals whose outstanding achievements have significantly advanced the field of health technology assessment, evidence-based drug reviews, or optimal technology utilization in Canada.

CIHR MSc awards have been granted to:
• Jolene Fisher for Morbidity and Mortality of Surgical Lung Biopsy in Interstitial Lung Disease;
• Melanie Penner for Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Sub-Specialized Multi-Disciplinary Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis Compared to Community Diagnosis
• Meera Rayar for Initiative to Maximize Progress in Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Therapy (IMPACT)
• Sophie Roher for Examining the Ethical Considerations of Offering Fertility Preservation Options to the Families of Male Paediatric Oncology Patients
• Ujash Sheth for a Time-Series Analysis of Acute Achilles Tendon Rupture Treatment in Ontario.

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http://www.ihpme.utoronto.ca/about/events/exevents.htm