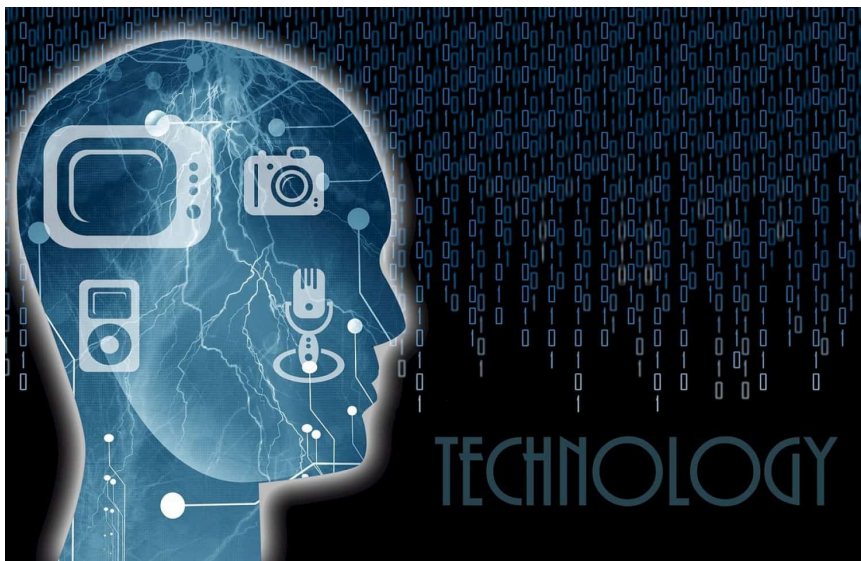

How Technology has impacted the Health Care Arena



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What effect does it have on an emotional connection between a Physician and his patient?

Healthcare is very often impacted and enhanced by the adoption of new technologies. Clinical practice is increasingly dependent on technology, which has significantly improved the way patients are treated for their illness, resulting in better outcomes. But has it also improved the emotional connection between a patient and his/her clinician?

In this progressively digitally connected world, doctors have to rely increasingly on electronic medical records that help them to diagnose and treat ailments, even at a distance from their patients. This means that clinicians are spending more time online than ever before. Is this affecting the way doctors are communicating with patients?

When physicians spend too much time looking at the computer screen in the exam room, nonverbal cues may get overlooked and affect doctors' abilities to pay attention and communicate with patients, according to a [Northwestern Medicine® study](#). This novel study documented that physicians who use electronic health records in the clinic room spend a third of the encounter time looking at the screen.

With one-third of the total time already spent on the computer screen, how will a physician can build an interpersonal relation with the patient?

There is another study undertaken in the emergency department at [St. Luke's University Health Network](#), where it was found that The pooled weighted average time allocations were 44% on data entry, 28% in direct patient care, and rest on other activities. Total mouse clicks approach 4000 during a busy 10-hour shift. Emergency department physicians spend significantly more time entering data into electronic medical records than on any other activity, including direct patient care," the investigators note."

Now that this technology is becoming omnipresent it is becoming quite difficult to unhook ourselves from these devices. In an interesting article by Andrew Sullivan, [I Used to Be a Human Being](#), the author has aptly described how an endless bombardment of news and gossip and images has rendered us manic information addicts.

Every hour I spent online was not spent in the physical world. Every minute I was engrossed in a virtual interaction I was not involved in a human encounter. Every second absorbed in some trivia was a second less for any form of reflection, or calm, or spirituality.

As his internet addiction grew, he was updating his blogs every half hour, garnering 100,000 followers in the process. However he also became physically ill, lost all his friends and found himself trapped in a virtual reality. He found automated life more efficient, But at what price? He wonders if we risk losing our souls, as we lose those moments of silence with ourselves.



Sadly, this is the story of most of us. On one hand, technology has improved patient care but with a shift in the interpersonal relations between a patient and a clinician. Some of these innovations may act as a barrier in the building of rapport with the patients.

When you type in Google for “how to de-addict from”, the first option it provides is “Phone”, ahead of “alcohol”. Doesn’t that sound alarming to you?

Whether an evolution or an addiction, the changes technology brings are inevitable; the onus is on understanding these changes and their impact on our very humanity.

References:

Northwestern Medicine®

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St. Luke's University Health

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