Q&A INTERVIEW WITH

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What are the top three factors shaping the healthcare industry?

Rising costs of healthcare, due to aging population and cost-pressures from targeted medicines, will maintain the focus in data interoperability and skills and tools to enable better use of data and analytics. It will be necessary to find means for data exploitation and combining different sources of data, like measuring patient reported outcomes, combining personal data to clinical data and evaluate direction towards value-based healthcare. Still, the main factor shaping the future will be Artificial Intelligence (AI) which will become an integrated part of care delivery, especially when detecting early symptoms of cancer and making imaging more effective (radiology algorithms) by helping clinicians to make more accurate diagnoses.

Also, remote diagnostics and homecare, at least in the countries of high digitalization and integrated care chains, will offer ways to lower the costs of healthcare delivery. Novel methods for analysis like blood biomarker analysis are transforming care delivery by enabling more frequent and accurate analysis, and also lab-on-a-chip (LOC) solutions will become more common, thus changing care delivery and healthcare structures.

Rise of precision medicine and genomics will raise awareness on ethical issues. Many countries, large and small, are launching their initiatives for creating new gene pools to enable breakthroughs in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment (like British UK Biobank, All of US, FinnGen and Estonian biobank). While these countries are competing for Life Science investments, there's also a growing importance of balance between interests and ensuring trust on professionals, technology and societies.

What key benefits will technologies such as AI, machine learning and IoT, bring to the health sector in 2019?

Algorithm-based decision making will save time for professionals to focus on care and empathy by improving diagnostics, especially when used in imaging and early detection of diseases. This will decrease individual suffering and hopefully lead to improved patient safety and quality of care. New technologies and analysis methods, like remote digital services and biomarker-based sampling will decrease cost of care.

What is the biggest challenge the health sector is currently facing?

Based on almost 15 years of experience from health sector, I still feel that professional mindset, and clinicians lacking interest of technology is still a main issue for big breakthroughs. In order to adjust technology to serve people, and not opposite, we need to motivate clinicians and healthcare professionals to become curious about technology and make them innovate together with tech professionals. New solutions and a wider engagement from whole community (of professionals) is needed to tackle the rising costs of care. Precision medicine and use of genomic data will make treatments more effective, but at the same time, costs on pharmaceuticals is rising too high from the viewpoint of societies and individuals. Professional communities need to solve these issues together.

What are your predictions for the industry for the next 10-12 months?

MyData, wearables and mHealth devices will challenge healthcare professionals and the traditional industry to rely on new technologies and data sources, professionals need to be able to partner with patients and find out how to approach individuals who are more and more aware of their own health and treatment. Genomics, more accurate analysis methods together with lowering cost of new analysis will fasten the progress of personalized medicine. Translation genomics research into clinical practices will become more common, at least pharmacogenetic testing should become a standard procedure in care delivery, decreasing cost of treatments and unwishful side-effects of medication.

In the Life Science industry, more and more pharma companies are willing to invest in generating new data sources for real world evidence (RWE). Real-world data, together with patient reported outcomes (PROMS) is needed to implement value-based healthcare practices. The Life Science industry is working on new collaboration models with authorities and societies.

Why are events like the FT's Digital Health Europe Summit important for the healthcare industry? And, what are you looking forward to the most at this year's summit?

For me, the most important thing is to form a common view on the future of healthcare, based on numerous dialogues with top-experts. I wish, that after this event, weak-signals and generic foresight about future of healthcare, in my mind, will transform into strong personal insight about the future. I also want to highlight some of recent innovations from Finland, where regulators are working together with companies to solve future challenges. Easy access to diverse, high quality and well-structured data is a necessity for evidence-based reforms in healthcare.

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