

The power of digitalising diabetes with SocialDiabetes for the future of healthcare

SocialDiabetes is participating in two NHS testbed projects to pilot the future of digital health and patient-centric diabetes care, as Ikuska Sanz, the firm's Director of Operations describes

The World Health Organisation considers diabetes to be one of the biggest health crises of the 21st century. There are currently 425 million diabetes patients worldwide and this figure is expected to increase to 629 million by 2045.¹ The typical sedentary lifestyle in Western societies, combined with a worsening diet over the last few decades, has caused a significant increase in obesity rates. The condition is closely linked to Type 2 diabetes, which is rapidly on the rise.

In the United Kingdom, someone is diagnosed with diabetes once every three minutes. There are currently 4.5 million people living with the disease in the country², more than the total combined figure for cancer and dementia sufferers and this number has more than doubled over the last 20 years. As a chronic condition, diabetes causes a significant strain on the public healthcare system, which takes responsibility for most of the costs related to the disease.

The latest generation of digital technology has opened unprecedented opportunities to deal with what is rapidly becoming a major public health problem. The intensive use of smartphones is permeating all major aspects of our lives, including our health. The majority of internet users have searched for a health topic online and 60% of smartphone owners have downloaded a health-care app at some point. The truth is

that most people live permanently connected to their mobile phones and an increasing number of young people and adults are using the internet for health-related purposes.

As one of the most data-driven diseases, diabetes is not a stranger to digital transformation. From movements such as the Open Artificial Pancreas System (#OpenAPS) to big biotech initiatives around automated insulin delivery systems and the multiple apps that help patients improve their daily control, technology is impacting all touchpoints for diabetes self-management, treatment, education and support. Digital tools are rapidly becoming an instrument to help transform the way organisations deliver medical care and diabetes is at the forefront of this transformation.

In this context, SocialDiabetes is set to become one of the best solutions to foster the digital management of diabetes. The company, a renowned start-up headquartered in Barcelona with offices in the UK, was first created to meet the needs of Victor Bautista, a Type 1 diabetes patient and current CTO & co-founder. The team now includes several people with diabetes and healthcare professionals.

"Our main goal is to help patients make better decisions at every step, and to make it easier for them to communicate with the healthcare professionals that are treating them",



Maria Salido and Víctor Bautista, co-founders

explains María Jesús Salido, CEO of SocialDiabetes. "We want to change the way diabetes is managed in the 21st century. We focus on healthcare systems that believe in innovation, such as the NHS, which is embracing technology and adopting innovative ways of doing things differently, including diabetes care.

SocialDiabetes has started working in the UK with support from the NHS. The company is already building strategic alliances with pharmaceutical, healthcare and medical device partners. "We offer a competitive product and we have received a very warm welcome. It is extremely fulfilling to work in such an open environment that allows us to innovate and provide added value", notes Salido.

An internationally recognised solution

After a couple of years of dedicated innovation and development, the result

of a continuous interaction with the community of users, the platform offers a safe and user-friendly solution that empowers Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes patients. It connects users with their peers, family members and healthcare professionals while giving doctors and nurses the chance to follow up with their patients online and collaborate across the wider system.

How SocialDiabetes works

The platform works as a virtual clinic where healthcare professionals are able to manage patients remotely and provide them with individual treatment and support. Clinicians monitor patients using a single dashboard that is filled with information from the in-app patient activity. All data is stored in the cloud. Healthcare professionals can prescribe SocialDiabetes as part of the treatment and can then monitor patient data (food intake, exercise, insulin dosage, emotions, etc) without having to wait for the next office visit. The traditional patient-doctor dynamic turns into a proactive one, both for the patient at home and the care provider at the clinic or hospital.

The outcomes are promising. A retrospective analysis of the SocialDiabetes database found that the use of the solution for six months results in 1% to 2% drop in estimated A1c³ for poorly controlled patients (initial eA1c greater than 8%). According to the International Diabetes Federation, every 1% drop in A1c reduces the risk of diabetes-related deaths by 21%, microvascular complications by 37% and heart attacks by 14%. The study also showed that the risks of hypoglycemia and severe hyperglycaemia are reduced by 25 to 40% for Type 1 patients after six months of use of SocialDiabetes.

These results were presented this year at the Advanced Technologies & Treatments for Diabetes (ATTID) con-

ference in Vienna and the Diabetes Technology Meeting in Maryland, 2017. The platform has the backing of the main regulatory agencies and complies with the quality regulations.⁴

Last year, the company was awarded a €1.6 million grant by the European Commission as part of the SME Instrument – Horizon 2020 program. The start-up came first in its category and received top marks across all factors evaluated: impact, excellence, quality and effective implementation. With over 350,000 downloads, the app has been translated into 11 languages and has more than 20,000 active users per month, a figure that the start-up hopes to multiply ten-fold by the end of 2019.

The NHS' commitment to SocialDiabetes

NHS Scotland chose SocialDiabetes to help educate patients with Type 1 diabetes with the use of mobile technologies. In this project, the company has partnered with Oxford University, Nottingham Trent University, Bertie Online and Lelan Solutions. The company has developed a version of their platform that is adapted to the project requirements and it includes a new feature that allows users to socialise with each other. The version, named SocialDiabetes Connect, allows patients to interact, share information and experiences and provide mutual support. The app also uses gamification to tell patients how well they are dealing with their disease.

SocialDiabetes is also a member of Diabetes Digital Coach, that focuses on diabetes self-management as a key point to improve health outcomes and lower costs.

SocialDiabetes is poised to transform diabetes, supporting front-line healthcare professionals, specialists and patients. The start-up's short- and

medium-term plans include integration with Alexa and Google Home, introducing predictive analysis, improving outcomes reports with aggregate patient data and adapting to UK-specific needs, as well as launching new social features for the community of users.

"We know what patients need and we focus all our efforts on improving their quality of life. Our mission is to digitalise diabetes management so that data is put to work in helping patients and medical professionals", states María Jesús Salido. "In the absence of a cure technology is the solution and SocialDiabetes will play an important role in the design of new health models based on the collaboration of everybody."

References

- 1 International Diabetes Federation <https://www.idf.org/about-diabetes/what-is-diabetes/facts-figures.html>
- 2 Diabetes UK https://www.diabetes.org.uk/resources-s3/2017-11/1111B%20The%20future%20of%20diabetes%20report_FINAL...pdf
- 3 Estimated average blood glucose levels (glycosylated haemoglobin).
- 4 CE Marking, HIPPA, MHRA, ISO 13485 medical device.



SocialDiabetes

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