

Telehealth, Scrubbing Robots Top Tech Watch List

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Health Information Management (HIM) professionals have a notoriously hard time getting folks in the C-suite to take on new health IT projects. But in one area, at least, that's beginning to change. Telehealth (or telemedicine) may have reached the tipping point in seeing a return on investment, according to the ECRI Institute's "2015 Top 10 Hospital C-Suite Watch List" report.¹

The list features some decidedly flashy technologies, such as disinfection robots, as well as flash-in-the-pan counterparts, like Google Glass. However, its data and evidence of growing support for telehealth should leave the burgeoning field's proponents optimistic.

The report's authors assert that wearable sensors, such as Apple's smart watch and Apple HealthKit-connected devices have helped fuel the growth of telehealth, while the life-saving potential of "telestroke" centers contribute to the urgency of getting programs implemented.

"Telestroke is often viewed as the poster child for telehealth success by providers, payers, and patients," the report states. "Telestroke solved a particular need—coverage by an expert neurologist to hospitals that could not provide coverage 24/7. Regional programs using hospitals or a neurology physician group as their hubs have strived to improve stroke care."

Other signs of promise for telehealth include:

- The Veterans Administration (VA) facilitated more than two million telehealth visits to over 690,000 veterans in the 2014 fiscal year, helping to lower the cost of treating VA patients.
- Google has partnered with several telehealth companies and has trials in the works to develop live-video medical care. With its business partners, Google is working to ensure that medical professionals participating in such programs are credentialed.
- Telehealth trade groups are pushing to make telemedicine a part of accountable care organizations, bundled payment initiatives, and make it an integral component of population health management.

Note

1. ECRI Institute. "2015 Top 10 Hospital C-Suite Watch List." 2015.
www.ecri.org/Resources/Whitepapers_and_reports/Top_Ten_C-Suite_Watch_List_2015.pdf.

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