

View from the Top: Achieving Excellence in Healthcare ICT Innovation and Achievement

HIMSS Middle East speaks with Dr. Peter Edelstein, Chief Medical Officer, Elsevier Clinical Solutions about the HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Award, ingredients for ICT excellence and viewing patient engagement as a team sport.



Dr. Edelstein, thank you for joining us for this interview. First and foremost, what are 3 critical ingredients driving ICT achievement and ICT Innovation globally?

Share 3 things that you see as critical drivers of ICT innovation in the Middle East.

1 First is the recognition by clinical, administrative, and governmental healthcare leaders of the need for dramatic changes aimed at improving the value of the care we deliver. While this may seem obvious, many clinicians and healthcare stakeholders across the world continue to be resistant to the difficult and significant changes required to dramatically alter the way in which we deliver care.

2 Second, it is critical to understand that only with deep involvement of patients (and their loved ones) can we truly realize successful healthcare reform; that is, we must include patients when we think of “providers.” We must discover new and better ways to engage, educate, and empower our patients to “own their health.” Only when patients actively participate in their own health and healthcare will we significantly change the value of healthcare.

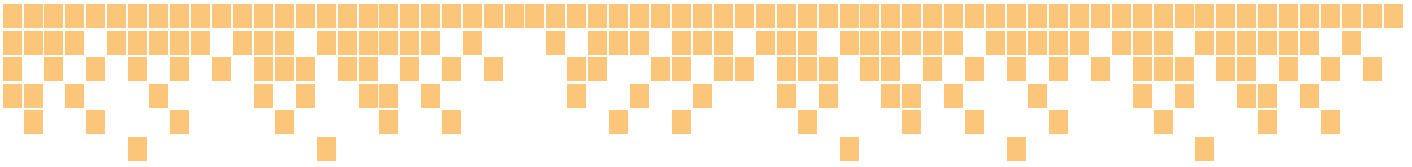
3 Third is the realization that ICT innovation and achievement is not a wedding, it’s a marriage; in other words, it is a long-term commitment in terms of resources and vision. From individual hospitals to national health systems, everyone must understand that improving the quality and cost efficiency of healthcare is a continuous process requiring ongoing human and financial resources.

1 The most important initial step in driving ICT innovation, achievement, and adoption anywhere is to simply begin talking about it. Strategic discussions that include healthcare stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives (including patients) are extremely valuable in creating a vision and an initial plan for moving forward. I already have seen examples of this critical process driving ICT innovation in the Middle East. For example, Elsevier is proud to host our Middle East Advisory Board, where every year we bring together key thought leaders in healthcare from across the Gulf region. The Advisory Board shares best practices, discusses challenges, and proposes potential solutions for advancing digital healthcare across the region.

2 Another critical driver of ICT innovation is the availability of current, credible, evidence-based information to guide clinical decisions. It is only through such scientifically valid knowledge that we can truly move toward consistent, sustainable, high value care. With such evidence-based content readily available, it is left to innovators to dream of new, integrated solutions to empower traditional providers (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc.) as well as patients in improving the quality and cost efficiency of health and healthcare across the Middle East.

3 A third critical driver of ICT innovation is the need to “localize” current, credible, evidence-based knowledge not only for the Middle East as a whole, but for specific sub-populations within the region. Many “best practices” have been developed in regions outside of the Middle East. To truly empower Middle Eastern providers and patients, this material must be localized not only for language, but for culture and for the varying ways in which differing user populations learn and adopt knowledge. ICT innovation must continue to drive this need for localizing new and complex clinical information (such as genomics) into forms which truly deliver high value to Middle Eastern providers and patients.





You were one of the judges for the HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Awards last year. What were some of the memorable highlights? Also, what are you looking forward to at this year's awards, in particular for Europe, since this is the first time it's made available there?

The APAC entries were as impressive as they were varied. The winner of the 'Outstanding ICT Innovation Award', KK Women's and Children's Hospital Singapore, developed and implemented a fully-integrated pharmacy automation system, not only allowing for reallocation of valuable human and financial resources (as the automated process took over medication packaging and labeling), but also supporting consistency and patient safety in the provision of medications.

The Middle East submissions were equally impressive. The Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi won the 'Outstanding ICT Achievement Award' by implementing a highly impactful "Stroke Care Pathway" within their EMR. Strokes are life-threatening events which require immediate and specific intervention. Reducing the variability in all clinical activities once a stroke is identified is proven to dramatically benefit stroke patients, as was demonstrated at the Clinic following implementation of their Pathway.

Based on the amazing past submissions from APAC and the Middle East, I fully expect that the submissions we receive from Europe will be equally creative. Selecting winners will once again be truly challenging!

You are an advocate for viewing Patient Engagement as a Team Sport. How can policy makers and healthcare providers be influenced to engage the patient actively, and through ICT?

Realistically, there is only a limited improvement in the health of our populations that can result from processes aimed at doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other traditional providers. Studies show us that even patients with chronic conditions spend only hours annually in the direct care of doctors. Thus if we are to dramatically improve the health of our populations, we must actively engage, educate, and empower our patients to take ownership of their health. And from a purely objective perspective, the evidence is clear: engaged patients demonstrate better clinical outcomes and lower costs of care. From a subjective perspective, every human being is currently or someday will be a "patient," so we all benefit from improved health. Policy makers, providers, and (most importantly) patients themselves must thus realize the importance of patient engagement and "health ownership" if we are to truly realize the tremendous potential of healthcare reform.

In today's world of smart phones and social media, the only way to successfully compete for patients' attention and engagement is through digital ICT solutions available at all times and at any location. Combined with human-to-human interactions between providers and patients, such ICT solutions offer the greatest opportunity to engage, educate, and empower patients to better health.

The UAE eHealth Week will offer a main track showcasing "best practices" from local, regional, and global stakeholders. At the same time, it will also feature specialized tracks such as Insurance and Pathology Informatics. With many different specialties and fields practicing HIT, how do Elsevier's solutions apply to all clinicians and specialized experts?

In order to best achieve consistent, sustainable, high value healthcare, all provider types (including patients and healthcare students) must have access to the same current, credible, evidence-based information at all points-of-care (including non-traditional care sites such as the patient home and place of employment). But students, doctors, nurses, patients, and others all interpret and adopt (learn) information differently. To address this challenge, Elsevier has developed a suite of solutions which empower all providers (including students and patients) with consistent current, credible, evidence-based information presented in solutions and formats which best empower the differing provider types.

Having provided scientific knowledge for over 130 years, and as the current provider of over 25% of the entire world's science, technology, and health information, Elsevier is uniquely positioned to empower healthcare reform with evidence-based knowledge through our suite of Clinical Decision Support (CDS) and Workflow solutions. By presenting the same "best practices" in formats appropriate for differing users (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, students, patients, etc.), and by delivering this information anytime, anywhere, Elsevier seeks to truly impact entire populations of caregivers, patients, and patient families.

What do you foresee are some of the global trends in Health ICT in the coming year, and how will these technologies help improve the patient health journey?

Over the last several years, healthcare across the world has been shifting from a narrow focus on "the doctor-patient relationship" to a broader vision of "population health." In reality, high value healthcare requires attention to both the individual patient and to the quality and cost-of-care for populations. In addition, we must strive to engage patients on an individual and population basis if we are to truly improve the health of the world. Success in both goals requires rapid access to current, credible, evidence-based information and guidance so that regardless of location, both individual patients and populations are provided the very best care. Technological advances in health ICT, combined with the personal human-to-human interactions between provider and patient, offer the best opportunity to meet this broad challenge.