



### **Are We Ready to Cope With Long-Term Health Challenges in Asia Pacific?**

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Urgent health challenges and fast-emerging digital technologies are prompting a global rethink of how healthcare is organized and delivered. Health leaders recognize the need for a more integrated approach to care that maximizes efficiency, improves patient experience and ultimately fosters a healthier population.

According to the World Health Organization, the proportion of the world's population over 60 will nearly double from 12% to 22% by 2050, with over half residing in Asia Pacific (APAC).<sup>i,ii</sup> At the same time, the rise of chronic and non-communicable diseases (NCD) will incur an estimated cost of US\$47 trillion globally by 2030.<sup>iii</sup> Improvements in medical technology and increasing resources alone may no longer be enough to ensure healthcare treatments remain accessible and affordable.

Meeting these emerging challenges will require a new approach to healthcare; one that applies technology to address the communication gaps between the various parts of a healthcare system and then creates a constant feedback loop between patients and the institutions and healthcare professionals that provide treatment. This 'connected care' facilitates the integration of all parts of the health system, from patients and their carers, family and friends to doctors to hospitals to insurers and governments. It is based on real-time communication, enabled through emerging technologies that include secure networks, linking software and devices that monitor key health indicators. It is underpinned by three core tenets: increasing access to healthcare, integrating systems, and promoting the adoption of connected technology – together, they lead to enhanced efficiency and better outcomes.

At Philips, we believe in the power of integrating solutions like hardware, software, and services that we co-create with our partners to solve healthcare challenges. For example, at the Philips APAC Center in Singapore, we have the Continuous Care Monitoring Room where healthcare professionals remotely monitor the health of patients with advanced cloud-based healthcare equipment and solutions. These pioneering technologies optimize the utilization of public health resources by reducing the need for hospitalization and empowering healthcare professionals with new ways of delivering care.

Recently, Philips launched the Future Health Index<sup>1</sup> (FHI), an important international study that gives new insight into how key global markets are positioned to meet long-term global health challenges and manage capacity through connected care technologies. Surveying over 25,000 patients and more than 2,600 healthcare professionals, the study measures the readiness of 13 key markets<sup>2</sup> to address the

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<sup>1</sup> To read the Future Health Index report in its entirety, and to access local market data in-depth, please visit: [www.futurehealthindex.com](http://www.futurehealthindex.com)

<sup>2</sup> Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United Kingdom and the United States



future of healthcare as perceived by key stakeholders, patients and healthcare professionals. The report focuses on three transformation factors for financially sustainable and patient-centered healthcare: access to healthcare, and the adoption and integration of connected solutions.

The study found that connected care integration is viewed as a priority worth pursuing. Majorities of both patients and healthcare professionals surveyed believe that integration of the health system can improve the quality of care for patients and have a direct positive impact on the health of the population.

There of course remain challenges to greater adoption of connected care, with cost, bureaucracy and privacy named as major stumbling blocks. Achieving integrated care also requires new organizational structures, governance, platforms and most importantly, changes in mindset. However, it is reassuring to see that countries in Asia Pacific are starting from a reasonably strong position in their readiness to adopt connected digital technologies which will ultimately drive transformation. Countries such as Singapore, China and Australia, scored above the 13-country average – demonstrating their readiness to meet long-term global health challenges through integrated connected care technologies.

What the FHI shows is that there is a growing opportunity for digital technology to drive healthcare transformation. In order to cope with long term health challenges and to improve the quality, access and affordability of care, we need to continue to shift our focus from hospital-based acute care to new models of integrated, coordinated care along the ‘health continuum’ which covers healthy living, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and home care.

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<sup>i</sup> World Health Organization. Available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs404/en/>

<sup>ii</sup> The United Nation. Available from: <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/ageing>

<sup>iii</sup> Jocalyn Clark. Medicalization of global health 3: the medicalization of the non-communicable diseases agenda. *Glob Health Action*. 2014; 7: 10.3402/gha.v7.24002.