

## Power to the Patients?



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Renowned cardiologist and Director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute Eric Topol believes that the future of medicine will include doctors making appointments with patients.

There was a time in healthcare when patients were dependent on doctors for medical tests. However, Dr. Topol believes that the future will not be so. Instead, patients will generate data themselves - not by going to the doctor - but by streaming it directly from life on the go. They will have virtual medical assistants right in their pockets and will use their smartphone to measure and interpret aspects of their health so that they are able to track their conditions and treat them in real time.

Approximately 13% of American take medications to treat depression. But today, modern technology has made it possible to quantify a patient's mood by assessing inflection and tone of voice, their breathing pattern, their blood pressure and their brain waves. This information can be integrated with other factors such as sleep patterns, exercise, communication patterns to formulate a diagnosis about the patient's state of mind and to find more effective ways to deal with this stress and depression.

This is the kind result-oriented approach that will become a critical component of healthcare in the future. It can be applied to medical conditions like epilepsy, autoimmune diseases and heart failure. In fact, there might just come a day when our smartphones could help us prevent heart attacks and strokes.

The future of healthcare will see patients becoming more empowered and less reliant on doctors. They may still seek their advice and guidance; they may still need them for tests and treatments. But a time is not far when patients will take on a more aggressive role and will be able to electronically share their data. They will not just be passive participants in the doctor-patient relationship but will instead play a critical role in the way their health is managed and treated.

Doctors may still be the most knowledgeable force in healthcare but the future will bring forth empowered patients who have the necessary information about their medical conditions and have the ability to understand their treatment options, discuss alternatives and take control of their health.

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