

# Social Media Notebook: The Health 2.0 Movement Must Keep its Eyes on the Prize

By Fard Johnmar

*On September 20, 2007, the first-ever conference devoted to "Health 2.0" convened in San Francisco. Co-produced by health industry consultants, Matthew Holt and Dr. Indu Subaiya, this well-attended event showcased the latest products designed to help consumers and physicians filter, sort, and comprehend health information.*



Holt, who trademarked it, defines Health 2.0 as the application of Web 2.0 tools (blogs, search engines, etc) to health. Physician-blogger Dr. Scott Shreeve categorizes it as a "new concept of healthcare wherein all the constituents (patients, physicians, providers, and payers) focus on healthcare value (outcomes/price) and use competition at the medical condition level over the full cycle of care as the catalyst for improving the safety, efficiency, and quality of healthcare."

Shreeve's view of Health 2.0 is attractive, because it is all-inclusive. Rather than focusing on technology, he is talking about how these tools can solve the health system's structural problems. Unfortunately, many at the Health 2.0 conference were not thinking this broadly, as prominent entrepreneur and investor Esther Dyson observed on the blog she writes for the Huffington Post. She wrote: "The companies [at Health 2.0]... can't simply dissolve a hairball, as someone described the healthcare system earlier in the day. They need to take on the calcified mess at the bottom of the drain—or to be more anatomical about it, they are clearing the capillaries and buffing the nerve endings, but at the center of everything there's a calcified heart pumping blood/information/money in the wrong direction through a tangled mass of arteries that misdirects resources to tumors and useless vestigial organs."

Dyson was concerned that some of the companies exhibiting at the event were more interested in pursuing their exit strategies than changing the healthcare system for the better.

## **Can Health 2.0 Solve the BIG Problems?**

The US health system has many problems, but these rise to the top of the list:

- Access: Ensuring everyone can enjoy good, quality healthcare
- Practice Variation: Streamlining the system to reduce gaps/differences in care between geographic regions and socioeconomic groups
- Administration: Reducing bureaucracy, duplication of services, and paperwork
- Consumerism: Helping consumers successfully assume the position of primary health manager
- Health Illiteracy: Reducing the proportion of American adults who are functionally health illiterate
- Caregiving: What can we do to help younger generations get ready to pay for and manage

their parents' (and grandparents') care? Dyson's (and my) frustration with the current Health 2.0 movement is that it is very fragmented. Because of this, it is not well-prepared to tackle the big issues. Granted, technology can only play a limited role in improving access, but it can help to solve other seemingly intractable problems.

Competition is good and necessary, but Health 2.0 companies should be looking for ways to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships when possible. In addition, while there is a great debate about the future of the US health system, there has been very little conversation about how innovative entrepreneurs can inject themselves into the policymaking process. Marty Tenenbaum, creator of CommerceNet, has suggested that businesses in the Health 2.0 space come together to form a network that would achieve some of these goals.

In a Health Care Blog post, he wrote: "[M]any energetic entrepreneurs are exploring the seemingly limitless opportunities and obstacles of [the] huge and important [health] market. Each provides useful but highly fragmented data or services (eg, PHRs, search, patient, and doctor communities). Aggregating data across communities and integrating services into complete solutions (eg, selecting the best treatment or physician for you) is much more valuable to consumers, and essential if we're actually going to impact healthcare in meaningful ways."

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