Industry Expert Interview:

David Van Sickle
CEO & Co-Founder

Why are digital therapeutics and digital medicine getting a lot of attention right now?
A variety of effective treatments have accumulated, relatively unused, in many therapeutic areas. Digital approaches have recently drawn a lot of attention because they can help put existing treatments to better and more productive use. Increasingly, digital approaches use computing power to personalize therapy, adapt dosing, and encourage more appropriate and effective management of diseases. In a mechanical-sense, they can also make therapies better-suited to the routines of daily life by increasing their utility and maximizing their benefit, while minimizing their disruption. This means widespread changes to the experience of a chronic disease through making care and treatment more personal, timely, convenient, affordable and accessible.

What should pharma’s role be in this ecosystem?
We believe pharmaceutical companies can use digital tools to build better relationships with the people and physicians who use their medicines, and create more holistic, supportive and beneficial therapeutic offerings. Therefore, digital companions become the physical manifestation of a set of services embedded with the years of accumulated knowledge, learning, and testing that characterize these companies.

In the respiratory disease space, a lot of activity is surrounding the practical development of drug-digital pairings. These range from simple reminders to technology-driven improvements in drug delivery, but their goal is the same: to improve outcomes for people with asthma and COPD by ensuring that the people who are prescribed these medications actually benefit from using them.

Digital health companies working with pharma also have to remember that these are global businesses. So the orientations of payers and providers to digital products in foreign markets can be as important as they are different from those in the U.S.

What are you most looking forward to at the Digital Therapeutics & Digital Medicine Summit?
This is an emerging industry with enormous potential to improve medical outcomes. The sector contains a group of thoughtful people who are obsessed with the promising yet puzzling future of healthcare. We are building businesses that by definition are trying to create surplus value for society. At the summit there will be a great mix of leaders from digital companies, pharma, biotech’s, investors and healthcare systems. I am looking forward to sharing with this group, learning from peers and creating new connections that can lead to future collaborations.

How should digital therapeutic and digital medicine companies interact with payers and providers?
One of the least appreciated challenges is how to productively reconcile differing views of the eligible population. Payer, provider and pharmaceutical organizations rarely align in where they expect digital solutions to be put to work. Some digital companies channel them toward challenging individual clinical cases, while others aim to shift the overall population distribution. This can have wide-ranging influences on product and service design, recruitment, enrolment, and ongoing support...not to mention payment models!

David will be showcasing the exciting work at Propeller Health at the Digital Therapeutics & Digital Medicine Summit 2018 on Feb 27th-28th in San Jose, CA. His presentation is titled “Digital Medicines and the Personal Future Care and Treatment for Chronic Respiratory Disease

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