Digital Health in Wellness: Getting You Up to Speed
Digital health – the use of wearables, in-home clinical devices, and applications to remotely generate and collect valuable user data – is impacting the wellness industry and revolutionizing employee wellness and health improvement initiatives. With new headlines daily regarding digital health, it can be difficult to stay up-to-date. As the provider of the industry’s leading digital health platform, we’ve helped many wellness, payer and healthcare organizations get up to speed on digital health and solve their data integration challenges.

Drawing from that experience, Validic has compiled the top digital health questions and answers to help wellness leaders get up to speed on the topic and begin implementing their strategic digital health initiatives.

**Question 1:** Why are employers and wellness organizations interested in integrating digital health data into their programs?

The rapid innovation and consumer adoption of digital health technologies is prompting employers and wellness organizations to integrate device-generated data into their employee health initiatives.

Ultimately, the key to a successful wellness and health improvement program is to create sustainable behavior change in employees that can help them live healthier and more productive lives. To best achieve this, organizations not only have to change how people move, sleep and eat, but also how they think about their health. Wearables and other digital health devices and apps are proving to provide the data needed to promote this new behavior, attitude, and lifestyle.
**Question 2:** What benefits do employers and wellness organizations realize by integrating data into their programs?

As the healthcare Internet of Things becomes an accelerated reality, employers can take advantage of this shift to utilize the data from digital health devices to work directly with employees to change behaviors, manage conditions and improve overall health and wellness. Some employers are already leveraging this data to form educational forums and online communities where employees can better manage their health by engaging and sharing with others via various online support groups and programs. These social network tools help employees feel empowered to take charge of their health and ultimately help keep them engaged in wellness programs for longer periods of time.

The opportunity is here — integrated health data is creating a holistic wellness solution promoting improved long-term lifestyle and behavioral changes for employees. This data also can help produce a continued drive forward for increased workplace productivity and more meaningful relationships between employers and employees. According to the Global Wellness Institute, costs of chronic disease, work-related injuries and illnesses, stress, and employee disengagement amount to more than $2.2 trillion each year in the United States\(^1\) — meaning wellness initiatives that engage employees in their health are critical.

**Question 3:** What types of digital health data are available?

Today, the acceleration of technology is fueling the ability to view more relevant wellness data than ever. There are more than 325 million connected wearable devices worldwide,\(^2\) generating valuable health data for users to gain deeper insights into their own wellness. Activity data, including steps and distance, are popular data endpoints for wellness companies to collect from wearable fitness devices. But many forward-thinking employers are increasingly relying on smartphones, wearables and other in-home devices that are designed to help consumers track additional parameters of their health in order to paint a more holistic view of employee health. A growing number of these devices collect and track data for common vital signs such as weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and sleep patterns. Some newer devices, however, can measure more detailed parameters including fitness levels, diet, posture, ultraviolet light exposure, and various other measures.

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Question 4: How should employers and wellness organizations evaluate digital health data?

Tracking an increase in step count might be a good start. But the industry is moving in a more interesting and advanced direction. Companies are using the actionable data that comes through Validic to create employee/patient profiles that bring in other data like weight, nutrition and sleep so any potential correlation or cause is not overlooked. For example, the rise in blood pressure could be a result of poor sleep. Newer wearables and digital health devices track many different types of data; most fitness trackers now include sleep tracking and heart rate and advanced sleep trackers include detailed heart rate data. In addition to helping employees track their progress toward one goal, wellness programs are starting to help their employees make these correlations with this digital health data — and this encourages people to more engagement in their well-being.

Question 5: What’s a BYOD policy, and why should companies consider it?

A BYOD, or bring your own device, policy allows employees to use a device they already own or to choose the device that is best suited to their needs. While the idea of limiting everyone in a company to a single digital health device may seem like the most straightforward approach, it places a ceiling on the success of wellness programs. For greatest success, let employees use the device they already have. Encourage employees to find the device that will work best for them, and they will likely be more engaged in its use. This approach will also help ensure long-term use of the device by the employee.

Question 6: Do employees want to use wearable devices and share the data with their employer?

Integrating digital health data into employers’ wellness plans can help make a substantial impact for both workers who want to improve their health, as well as employers looking to reduce healthcare-related costs and improve workforce productivity.

Employees are quickly adopting this technology and integrating it into their daily lives, and this is good news for employers. A 2016 survey from Rock Health showed that 46 percent of consumers are now considered active digital health adopters, up from 19 percent in 2015. As more consumers begin to value the ownership of their health, the inclusion of patient-generated health data from devices that users already own will become increasingly important in wellness programs.

A recent employer and employee survey conducted by WELCOA and Validic found that more than 80 percent of employers recognize that digital health technology, such as a wearable fitness device, encourages employees to be more physically active. And 70 percent of employees said they would be more likely to use a wearable fitness tracker if their employer provided or reimbursed for the device. However, the majority of employers still do not offer programs that leverage these technologies. This is a great opportunity to close this “engagement gap.”

**Question 7: What’s the challenge with digital health in wellness?**

Wellness companies are continuing to look for new ways to thrive in a constantly evolving healthcare industry. As wellness companies are trying to compete, they are looking to capitalize on the growing trend of mobile health, and they are struggling to find ways to handle the integration and management of patient clinical devices, fitness wearables and wellness applications. With over 100,000 digital health devices and applications currently on the market, and a projected 90 million over the next decade, a key challenge is keeping pace with innovation and the speed of the market.

**Question 8: Who is Validic and how can we help?**

Validic provides the industry’s leading digital health platform connecting wellness companies, providers, payers, pharmaceutical companies and healthcare technology vendors to the world of digital health data gathered from wearables, smartwatches, fitness equipment, in-home clinical devices, biometric tests, and wellness applications. Validic solves wellness data integration challenges with one quick deployment solution making digital health data accessible and actionable for you.

Reaching more than 223 million lives in 47 countries, Validic’s growing base of customers includes WebMD, Cerner, SimplyWell, The Vitality Group and more. Additionally, WELCOA, the Wellness Council of America, selected Validic as the platform to power its National On The Move Wellness Challenge for companies. With access to digital health data, Validic customers are able to accelerate their strategic business initiatives, including health engagement strategies, incentive programs, wellness challenges and more.

Validic was named to Gartner’s “Cool Vendors” list and received Frost & Sullivan’s “Best Practices and Best Value in Healthcare Information Interoperability” and “Top 10 Healthcare Innovating Disruptor” awards.
Question 9: What types of devices are in Validic’s marketplace?

Validic’s extensive and diverse marketplace for consumer and clinical digital health technologies offers a single connection to a variety of meaningful digital health data. Our continuously expanding and comprehensive ecosystem is ready to deploy when you need it. Validic’s hundreds of integrations range from the most popular fitness wearables and smart bands to the most innovative clinical devices and healthcare applications. We are in tune with the market and continuously in conversations with app and device manufacturers to provide our clients with a robust, growing marketplace of options. Additionally, our future integration roadmap is heavily customer-driven. As our clients hear from their end-users and patient populations what applications and devices are being used, we will work to get them integrated into the Validic Ecosystem.

Question 10: Why Validic?

Our clients tell us that by using Validic, they better coordinate and verify incentive programs, improve their participant engagement strategies and more efficiently manage their employee populations. Additionally, we know that more and more companies are choosing Validic for these benefits:

- **Immediate access:** Instant connections to a wide range of fitness, clinical and wellness devices, wearables, smart bands, sensors, fitness equipment and health applications. Validic can be deployed in hours, not months or years, saving a company’s technical team valuable time to focus on developing their product and end user experience.

- **Safe, secure and standardized data:** All data is de-identified using FDA, HIPAA, and Safe Harbor standards. We deliver the data into our client’s system in a uniform format with standardized units.

- **Save money:** According to global third party research, Validic saves companies 90 percent or more per year when compared to the cost of building and maintaining a comparable system.

- **Scale and focus:** Validic allows companies to implement their strategic digital health initiatives faster and to focus on their core business imperatives.

- **Commitment to the success of our clients:** Validic’s sole focus is to help companies conveniently overcome the business and technical challenges associated with digital health integration.

With access to this data, Validic customers are able to accelerate their strategic business initiatives, including patient engagement strategies, incentive programs, wellness challenges and more.
Question 11: What’s an example of a client success story?

You don’t have to look too hard to see that wellness and healthcare organizations are seeing more and more successful uses of patient-generated health data to accelerate their business. Through its partnership with Validic, SimplyWell, a provider of medically-based population health management solutions, has been able to solve a host of challenges associated with accessing and utilizing digital health data. Utilizing this data, SimplyWell provides participation data, cohort participation data and risk level data to enhance employer claims reporting. Data collected can be used to identify individuals with a defined set of risk factors, allowing employers to create targeted outreach programs, such as disease management initiatives. In addition, SimplyWell can now sync data from a variety of health-related devices, such as glucose meters and blood pressure cuffs, improving employee engagement, and tracking and reporting of health changes.

After just six months, SimplyWell increased member engagement via the use of wearable wellness devices from 200 users to more than 5,100 members (20 percent of which have more than one application or device synced to the platform).

In addition, SimplyWell has been able to add device and application integrations into its personal portal quickly and cost effectively, allowing it to scale its business efficiently. With the ability to integrate hundreds of health and wellness technologies, the company has saved close to $1.5 million in application interface build-out costs.
Are you ready to get up to speed on digital health and explore the impact it can have on your wellness initiatives? Contact Validic at hello@validic.com or visit validic.com to learn more.
Validic guides wellness organizations, providers, payers and pharma companies through the technical complexities associated with accessing and operationalizing patient-generated health data. Validic's scalable, secure solutions help you improve operational efficiency and patient outcomes by delivering personal health data from hundreds of home health devices seamlessly into your existing workflows.

Validic was named to Gartner’s “Cool Vendors” list and received Frost & Sullivan’s “Best Practices and Best Value in Healthcare Information Interoperability” and “Top 10 Healthcare Disruptor” awards. Connect with Validic today to find out how wellness is innovating to create more data-driven and integrative experiences.

To learn more about Validic, follow Validic on Twitter: @validic or visit: www.validic.com