

USC Body Computing Conference 2015

At the ninth annual USC Body Computing Conference, Karten Design heard from leading innovators in the digital health space, from physicians using robotics to optimize heart surgery to 3-D artists who are working to envision the immersive experiences of the future. We witnessed the launch of the world's first Virtual Care Clinic, and previewed emerging virtual/augmented reality solutions that promise to radically disrupt healthcare delivery.



“Until we really get serious about digital health, I don’t think we can actually shift the conversation from ‘disease’ to ‘health.’”

– Dr. Michael Quick, Provost, USC



BORDERLESS CARE

“The doctor will see you now—anytime, anywhere.”

–Jim McGrann, CEO, VSP Global

Dr. Leslie Saxon introduced the world’s first Virtual Care Clinic—a revolutionary care model that leverages virtual doctors and evidence-based health content to provide borderless, on-demand, 24/7 access to care. The virtual clinic will scale the reach of doctors, providing personalized health information to patients when and where they need it. Initial studies have revealed that patients often trust virtual doctors over human ones due to their consistent, non-judgmental demeanor.

HEALTH IS HOLISTIC

“Emotion, empathy, enlightenment—three words I wasn’t expecting to hear cited at a digital health event.”

– Maneesh Junjeja, Digital Health Futurist

Physiology is only one piece of the health puzzle; mental and emotional health are equally important to wellbeing. Presenters stressed that by understanding people holistically, we can gain greater insight into their health and how best to impact it. For example, the app Biogram contextualizes biometric data by combining users’ heart rates with the photos they share. Stuart Karten shared his vision for the future, in which the “connected home” will become the new platform for health, impacting all areas of people’s lives.

VR POTENTIAL IN HEALTH

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

– Buckminster Fuller quoted by Melissa Painter, Executive Producer, 5D Global Studio

We got a first look at the new ways VR/AR is being used to address problems in healthcare, ranging from surgical simulation, disease management, and social isolation to phobia treatment, brain training, and PTSD therapy. 20/20 Hindsight, the winner of the conference’s VR Hackathon, presented an app that builds empathy and encourages treatment compliance by simulating what diabetic patients might experience if their vision deteriorated over time. Another platform, RxVR, enables post-op patients to seek psychological support and encouragement from a virtual community.

TRENDS

➔ Move Over, Silicon Valley:

Los Angeles could be shaping up to become the central hub of virtual and augmented reality tech. Panelists pointed out that, while Silicon Valley still dominates the digital health industry, the majority of virtual and mixed reality content is being generated right here in L.A.—which makes sense, given the close Hollywood connection.

➔ VR Usability Challenges:

Users complain that heavy, uncomfortable VR goggles make them feel too separated from the world around them. Limited 90-degree views are disorienting and could potentially create developmental problems in users over time. Although a few high-quality VR systems exist, people who have only experienced low-fidelity systems tend to discount VR technology altogether.

💰 Venture in VR:

The digital health sector currently boasts over 120 companies worth \$1+ billion (“unicorns”). The VR/AR market has less than a handful. Experts predict slow market growth in VR/AR until its content, quality, and user experience have been proven out. Then? “Hockey stick growth.”