

More big names join effort to help improve mHealth apps

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Four leaders in medicine and the app industry have been named to the board of directors for a nonprofit effort to collaborate with mobile health app developers, patient advocates and others to develop best practices aimed at promoting the safety and effectiveness of mHealth apps.

The organization, dubbed Xcertia, was founded in December 2016 by the AMA, American Heart Association, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society and digital health nonprofit DHX Group.

These organizations each have representation on the Xcertia board of directors, which is chaired by Michael Hodgkins, MD, who is vice president & chief medical information officer at the AMA and was recently named one of the top 25 CMIOs at health care organizations.

"Xcertia is fortunate to have a diverse, influential and highly motivated core group of individuals representing and guiding our collaborative effort to develop best practices aimed at promoting safe, effective and reputable mobile health apps," Dr. Hodgkins said. "We look forward to the contributions from our new directors as Xcertia continues to grow and prepares to introduce a trusted set of guidelines for the industry."

One of the new board members is Kaveh Safavi, MD, senior managing director, health industry at Accenture.

"As health care consumers further embrace digital health tools, we're seeing mobile health apps empower patients to take charge of their health and interact with physicians on their own terms," he said. "The future of health care depends on the development of digital capabilities that are safe, secure and that enable patients to share data and doctors to deliver care wherever they are, which is why I'm honored to lend my experience toward this initiative."

Morgan Reed, also joining the board, is president of ACT | The App Association, which more than 5,000 app companies and information technology firms in the mobile economy.

“Mobile apps have the potential to revolutionize health care by giving individuals greater access to their health information while improving patient outcomes,” Reed said. “It is important to incorporate the voices of doctors, insurers and mobile health innovators to develop the guidelines and practices necessary to promote effective and safe mobile health apps. We are excited to be part of this endeavor.”

One of the most respected names in health care, the Mayo Clinic, will also have representation on Xcertia board. Steve Ommen, MD, is associate dean and medical director of connected care at Mayo Clinic, which he said “recognizes the unique capabilities that mobile devices offer to patients and health care teams.”

“We approach app development with a focus on meeting patient needs as the priority,” Dr. Ommen added. “Apps need to increase clarity and not add complexity for the patients or the care teams. A major goal is to help providers and care teams connect to patients, extending and enhancing our relationships with patients.”

The final addition to this round of new board members is Joseph Kvedar, MD, vice president of connected health at Partners HealthCare.

“Making mobile health apps a trustworthy resource for consumers, and giving clinicians confidence in these digital tools are critical steps in advancing the adoption of safe and effective digital technology,” Dr. Kvedar said.

For Dr. Kvedar, a principal concern that needs to be addressed in mHealth is data security, which takes on new importance in light of the record-breaking Equifax data breach that has compromised the personal information of an estimated 143 million Americans.

“There is always some risk sharing personal data, but there are also rewards,” Dr. Kvedar said. “In my opinion, we can take steps to minimize the risk and clear the path for the widespread use of digital technologies to positively impact health outcomes, enhance the lifespan of our citizens, and improve the patient-provider relationship.”

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