



“Tap Here For A Doctor” – The Proliferation of Telemedicine In The Gig Economy

Insights

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Several years ago, many people were leery of the thought of ordering personal drivers through a mobile app and getting into a car of a complete stranger. However, over time, the idea of ride-sharing through Uber or Lyft has become commonplace as the experience has proven to be safe and cost-effective.

How will people feel about interacting with medical professionals on a similar platform, however? If the idea of ride sharing made some people uncomfortable, the idea of on-demand healthcare workers is probably frightening. However, the concept of telemedicine through a gig economy platform is coming to a city near you – if it has not already arrived. Those in the industry hope that it is soon as common as jumping in a stranger’s car.

Telemedicine is a new but growing phenomenon. Why leave your home to go to a medical appointment when you can skype or text your physician? Telemedicine practitioners say virtual appointments provide greater access to care and engagement with patients. It is projected to have seven million patient users by 2018 and to become a \$36.2 billion industry as early as 2020. Approximately 90% of healthcare executives report that their organizations are already using or have plans to implement telehealth platforms. According to recent studies, 73% of consumers say they would discuss a health concern with a virtual doctor, and more than 50% would use the platform for an annual physical exam.

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of medical care professionals in the United States. According to the U.S. Health Services and Resources Administration, over 65 million Americans live in “primary care deserts” where access to primary care is limited or non-existent. Telemedicine can help bridge the gap and provide care for this segment of the population.

Although telemedicine is not a new concept, Nomad Healthcare recently announced its intention to delve into the business from a sharing economy basis. Initially, Nomad created a platform enabling doctors and nurses to partner with hospitals in need of medical professionals on a short-term, freelance basis. Now, it plans to create an online jobs marketplace for doctors who want to contract their services. Our blog recently covered a similar trend in Europe.

This concept could gather steam in part because it is very much millennial-driven. Businesses across various professions continue to search for effective methods of attracting and retaining millennial talent (those generally born between 1982 and 2004). This segment of the population will soon be replacing baby boomers in leadership positions across the country. That said, finding ways to successfully motivate these professionals is very important to many business leaders.

Like their millennial counterparts, physicians and other healthcare professionals are interested in remote work. So the idea of having the option to work full time for a hospital, while also being able to perform contract work, is attractive to many millennials. These workers are also amenable to short-term work assignments where they are able to earn money per gig. In the tech community, many short term projects are more lucrative than fulltime positions. Healthcare professional millennials are certainly taking note.

We will continue monitoring the telemedicine movement and will provide additional updates relating to legal concerns, compliance, and other relevant issues.