

MOBILE HEALTH AT THE FOREFRONT OF TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

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Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present the second issue of the Journal for the year. The current issue highlights excellent examples of the capacity for translational research in mobile health. Fundamentally, the concept of translational research refers to the evolution of “bench to bedside” care. In the past the concept has referred to the application of knowledge attained through basic science research to improving clinical outcomes for patients. In this context, mobile technologies such as smartphones and tablet devices with their increasing accessibility and user-friendly interfaces have a great potential to demonstrate clinical benefits.

Smith et al demonstrate the ability of mobile technologies to improve quality of care through facilitating clinician-patient interaction. In their proof-of-concept study, the authors demonstrate that barriers to clinician-patient interactions can be overcome with video-conferencing using tablet devices. Using the example of patients with short bowel disorders receiving home parenteral nutrition, the authors demonstrated that home-based video conferencing was feasible, and received well by patients and their families in the daily management of chronic disease. Furthermore, the scheduled videoconferences provided an out-of-hospital forum for clinicians to monitor the symptoms, clinical parameters, and examine potential clinical risks including intravenous line sites for infection. Whilst the authors acknowledged obvious limitations of internet connectivity and privacy, overall the study

showed that this modality of clinical interaction clearly has a role for chronic disease management. This particularly poignant to the management of conditions whereby patients often have prolonged intervals between scheduled hospital outpatient follow-up during which potentially avoidable complications occur necessitating hospitalization.

Over the past half decade, governments and health policy makers have mandated the imperative for research institutes to focus on translational research. The United Kingdom has invested 5 billion Pounds to establish translational research centres, mirroring 6 billion Euro by the European Commission for translation health research.¹ Mobile technologies stand at the forefront of effective translation of the application of novel devices to facilitate and enhance patient care. As demonstrated in the current issue, the applications of translation research in mHealth are varied and diverse. Continued engagement of commercial, government and private stakeholders are required to keep up the momentum in ensuring these technologies are safe, reliable, accessible and affordable, particularly to those in low-resource settings, where the greatest growth potential rests. Only then will we have realized the potential of translational research in mobile health.

References

1. Woolf SH. The meaning of translational research and why it matters. *Jama* 2008;**299**(2):211–13.