

Innovative Partnership Driving Healthcare Delivery

Ms Jane Ong Financial Services Lead, Greater China, Edelman Public Relations Company, introduced the concept of partnerships within the healthcare industry and how the industry is adapting to and introducing innovations.

Mr Jacky Chan, Regional Chief Executive, AIA Group, gave the AIA Vitality initiative as an example of innovative thinking, which had moved the company's relationship with clients to a new level – a partnership rather than payer-provider - while promoting an all-round healthier lifestyle. "We want to be partners with our customers for their whole end-to-end healthcare journey," he said.

The complexities of the contemporary healthcare landscape come via budget constraints being felt by both governments and insurers, according to Ms Sigal Atzmon, CEO, Medix Global. Today there is a hybrid situation starting to develop in the healthcare market as customers look for what is "sustainable, attainable and affordable" – but more models of services and support need to be developed that link technology with healthcare providers, service providers and insurers, leading to better medical outcomes.

Ms Atzmon agreed with Mr Chan, saying that for both businesses in the industry and customers it is all about finding the right partner "that shares the same vision", and believing that customers are no longer payers but partners. Dr Terence Fung, Deputy Head, Department of Surgery, Union Hospital, looked at the quality of healthcare available from both private and public sources in Hong Kong, highlighting that it is "very accessible and practical" and that the Government has been working to ensure the public has as wide a choice as possible.

Dr Yau Teng Yan, Chief Medical Officer, Holmusk, described how his company is a "technology provider in the healthcare space."

"We looked at what was happening in the banking sector and the finance sector where the entire way of doing business has changed. Everything can be done at the press of a button," he explained. Hence Holmusk is shifting healthcare to a digital future, with platforms that provide digital therapeutics and specialty electronic health records.

Such innovations have resulted in more stakeholders and have made the industry more complex, said Dr Yan. This brought the discussion back to the theme of partnerships, and Ms Ong talked about the relationship between AIA and Medix Global.

Mr Chan explained how the two companies had found they were aligned in terms of where they wanted to expand the healthcare business and its

relationship with customers. Hong Kong has impressive private and public healthcare, Mr Chan said, but there are issues, including ensuring customers get the right advice. "In the old days you heard a lot about patients getting a second opinion, but this was just an opinion, just a report. The customer sometimes did not still get the full picture."

What Medix has been developing is a case management service, which helps patients understand their disease, the treatment and the support they would get. The two companies are aligned in improving the service to each customer. Ms Atzmon said one of the most important things her company is able to provide through the partnership with AIA is a path through what is available to people seeking treatment and support.

"These days when there are so many great options with healthcare, there are also so many questions," she said. Most patients don't "have the tools to know" which doctor or specialist to see. Previously the cover was arranged by healthcare providers, but new partnerships within the industry itself mean customers can now make "evidence-based, quality decisions."

The industry has moved beyond the concept of service providers to strategic partnerships that help the customer on the "most difficult journey in their lives."

Dr Terence Fung, Deputy Head, Department of Surgery, Union Hospital, agreed that there is an overabundance of choice, something that in itself is a positive in terms of allowing for improved health in general, but "there is no single way to find a cure" so patients need to make more decisions than ever before. "It's like you can take a bus or a taxi and you will still reach your destination."

Healthcare has never been better in terms of quality service and the education provided to patients, but there is still a relative lack of support in services that help advise on the higher priorities when it comes to treatments and, importantly, spending.

Dr Yan said the industry should expect many more questions to be raised in the near future as innovations in both procedures and services are being introduced at such a rapid rate. Included in these questions is just who pays for treatments that "we now know can save lives" – should it be governments, individuals or insurers?

Ms Ong then introduced the issue of digital technology and how that might impact on the industry, and Mr Chan said the concerns initially are about customers accessing correct information. "In the end-to-end journey, we should make sure the customer receives the best information."

In closing, Ms Atzmon said Artificial Intelligence has to be part of healthcare, helping provide people with the knowledge and tools needed to understand treatment and services. "It's going to make it fast and accessible, she said, "but at the end of the day you have to have a doctor to make everything possible."