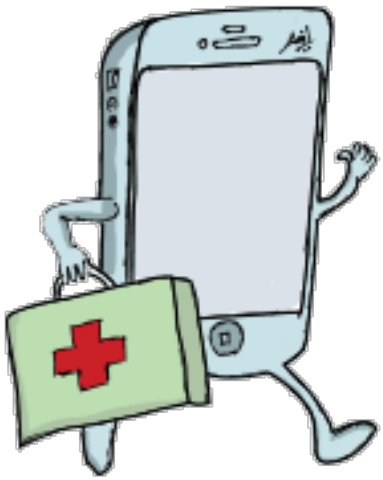
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Smartphones preferred channel for healthcare'

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Singapore: Smart phones are the preferred tool for patient's engagement and communication with their healthcare providers and people are looking forward to get more healthcare services right on their phone, according to a global survey by FICO, a predictive analytics and decision management software company.

According to the survey, 80 percent of the global respondents would like the option to use their smartphones to interact with health care providers, 76 percent of them are keen to be reminded of their medical appointments and 69 percent would like to receive reminders to arrange appointments or to prompt them to take their medication on their handphones.

"The way health care organizations communicate with people is changing, as individuals become more and more sophisticated about using information technology to make health-related decisions," said Dr Stuart Wells, chief product and technology officer, FICO. "People are especially interested in mobile services that can help them manage their personal health and shop for health care services. The leading health care providers are increasingly turning to mobile technologies to meet this demand, and to engage frequently and proactively with consumers."

The FICO survey showed that 56 percent of people worldwide trust health care organizations with personal data. So while e-health records have yet to take off in many countries, simple innovations around mobile alerts and information services are helping to build the trust necessary for this trend to continue.

"Mail order pharmacies are checking customer orders via mobile applications, insurers are validating policy details and medical service providers are requesting feedback on the quality of their services or managing follow-up care," said Dr Wells. "Privacy is critically important and consumers are required to opt-in, but given the benefits of mobile technology in the health care field, that doesn't appear to be an impediment to adoption. People are eager to have a dialog with their healthcare providers in ways that are convenient to them."

The potential for mobile technology in health care ties in with another emerging trend - an increase in the use of alternative advice channels. Almost two-thirds of smartphone users want to receive medical advice through digital channels instead of visiting a doctor. In addition, 71 percent of smartphone users are open to offers of relevant healthcare services from

businesses, and 53 percent are open to provider-initiated communications.

The survey looked at consumer preferences and tendencies with regards to mobile, online and in-person interactions with health care providers. 2,239 adult smartphone users were surveyed in the UK, Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Turkey and the United States.