



Deni Auclair
VP & Lead Analyst
T. +1 508-785-8384
dauclair@outsellinc.com

Insights

It's More Than an App: UpToDate Anywhere Works Toward Standardizing Quality of Care

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Wolters Kluwer Health's UpToDate is more than a product, it's a philosophy: providing quality healthcare to every corner of the world, regardless of location and demographics.

Important Details

Clinical decision support tool market leader UpToDate began its march toward mobile in 2011 with the launch of its app. This allows individual users to access UpToDate content anywhere they can connect to the internet. UpToDate Anywhere (UTDA), the enterprise licensing model, launched in North America in 2013, allowing institutions to offer institution-wide users access via mobile apps for the first time. The tool also serves as the platform to enable integration with electronic health record (EHR) systems, and physicians in many countries can earn CME credit with every search.

Wolters Kluwer Health announced the global rollout of UTDA in February 2014, providing the benefit of content accessible via mobile devices and streamlined user registration for hospital IT and library management, as well as the ability of physicians to search content using local language search and navigation. Search in Your Own Language is a customizable suite of local-language search and navigation tools allowing providers to research clinical questions in their native language, streamlining searches and grading recommendations by leveraging an advanced translation system in eight languages: Traditional and Simplified Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, and English. It also incorporates auto-complete in a user's native tongue to deliver faster results.

After the initial North American launch of UTDA, the global rollout continued in May 2014 in Western Europe and the UK, followed by Latin America in September and Asia in December. More regions are scheduled for 2015, increasing regional access worldwide.

While providing time-saving benefits to all hospitals through its ease of registration and access to content, it's the fact that providers around the world are now getting and using consistent, accurate

information to treat patients that appeals to healthcare advocates. This drive for consistency extends to other countries, both to UTDA customers and, in emergency or heightened health crisis situations, to those who most need critical information. In December, for example, Wolters Kluwer announced free web access to all UpToDate content in high-Ebola-risk countries Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, and web access to Ebola topics worldwide.

Implications

Businesses have long touted the benefits of standardization – lower costs, higher baseline quality – and aspire to achieve it where possible. Much of the appeal of standardized processes is the benefit of metrics: quantitative evaluation of performance through measurement of adherence to an established standard.

The drive for consistency in healthcare is based on the observation that physicians can – and do – provide dramatically different treatments for similar medical conditions. This disconnect can be costly, such as using a more expensive treatment when a less expensive approach might be as effective, or it can be dangerous, such as failing to provide patients with treatment the evidence suggests is best.

While continuing to embed UpToDate in healthcare facilities across the world may seem like “just business,” the respected clinical support tool is actually addressing a population health “meta-metric”: variability in the quality of healthcare. The rollout of UpToDate Anywhere, to be completed this year, aligns with standardization of quality of care, as access to evidence-based clinical decision support can reduce variability in the care provided throughout a city, region, or country. Access by municipal, regional, or national health ministries or agencies can directly impact and equalize care at a higher level, whether in a hospital, community clinic, or at home through a visiting nurse. Variability is something to which rural areas in developed countries, and third world and developing countries that are fragmented or have compromised healthcare systems, are more vulnerable. Not to mention situations within a single city, where economically depressed areas are adjacent to middle-to high-income areas, both needing access to information to provide quality treatment. UTDA helps bridge the quality-of-care gap by bringing the same evidence-based content to those facilities as that accessed by more prominent, high-profile hospitals and healthcare facilities.

This, of course, doesn't mean that all medical facilities will magically provide the same quality of care – that depends on funding of medical supplies, the facility itself, high-quality physicians, and so on. But the creation of “islands of excellence” is a step in the right direction as a group of clinicians using the same evidence-based information and recommended treatments to treat patients strongly supports the philosophy of a standardized approach to providing quality care. With this latest launch in Asia, UpToDate is leading the way to that goal.

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www.outsellinc.com
info@outsellinc.com

Burlingame, CA USA
+1 650-342-6060

London, United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 8090 6590

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