

Insight Driven Health

The Next eHealth Wave for Silver Surfers: Health Management

Silver surfers—digital-savvy seniors 65 and over—are more interested in using digital tools to manage their health than they are in using them to manage their healthcare costs, reveals Accenture research.

This preference is one reason that silver surfers are a desirable consumer segment among seniors for Medicare plans. It also suggests that health plans serving Medicare consumers must rethink how they integrate digital into care planning for seniors because one-size-fits-all strategies are not sufficient.

A large, stylized blue chevron graphic pointing to the right, composed of two parallel lines that taper towards the right. It is positioned behind the text "High performance. Delivered.".

High performance. Delivered.

Digital is for everyone

Contrary to the popular belief that only younger generations are technology adopters, the aging population is riding the ehealth wave—and has been.

The strong digital engagement trend among Medicare consumers that Accenture has previously reported continues.¹ Today, the vast majority (81 percent) of people 65 and over in the United States says that technology is important to their everyday lives. What's more, 68 percent of them consider technology to be "very important" or "somewhat important" to managing their health.

¹ <http://www.accenture.com/us-en/Pages/insight-silver-surfer-catching-ehealth-wave.aspx>

This is according to the Accenture 2014 Patient Engagement Survey of more than 10,000 consumers in the United States and nine other countries, including about 350 US seniors.

Health outcomes, not costs

This connection between technology and health management is at the heart of why silver surfers' ehealth behaviors are so important to understand.

Not only do an overwhelming number (82 percent) of silver surfers feel an inherent motivation to actively manage their general health, 36 percent think that new technology has made it easier, and 61 percent want new technology to do this.

In addition, most (62 percent) silver surfers say that technology is important for managing their health because it helps them to improve their health or understand conditions or medications.

Yet only 7 percent point to cost savings. Both seniors 65 and older and those under 65 focus on using digital tools for health management.

However, this trend is even stronger among silver surfers (62 percent) than among younger people (55 percent.) This trend also applies when comparing older seniors and those emerging into Medicare (55 to 64 years old). Consider these groups' patterns of electronic medical record (EMR) use (See Figure 1.):

- Accessing outcome-related data.** 57 percent of Medicare age seniors use their EMRs to access outcome-related health data such as lab work and blood test results compared to 46 percent of seniors aging into Medicare.
- Accessing billing data.** 27 percent of seniors aging into Medicare use their EMR data to access billing information compared to 20 percent of Medicare age seniors.

Figure 1. Seniors are more likely to use EMRs to access health outcomes data rather than cost data, with this trend even stronger among those 65 and older.

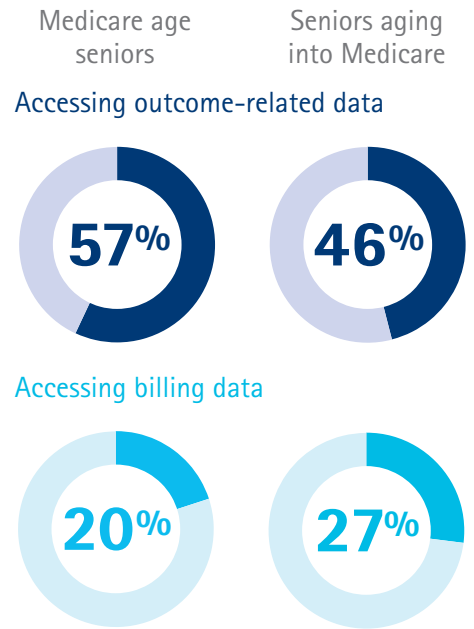
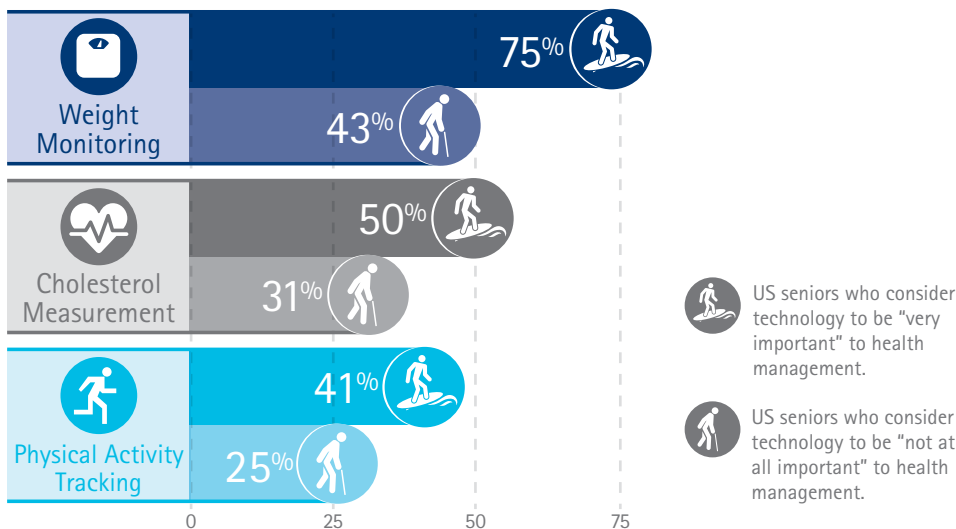


Figure 2. Silver surfers are more likely to perform health management activities than peers who think technology is "not at all important" to health management.



Source: Accenture 2014 Patient Engagement Survey
How important is the use of technology when it comes to managing your health?

A foundation for good health

Silver surfers' strong emphasis on using digital to manage their health also makes them an attractive group for Medicare plans to target. There is a striking correlation between silver surfers' use of technology in health management and the likelihood that they will perform health management activities. Simply put, higher overall health management activity can translate into healthier behaviors, and in some cases, healthier people.

For example, of the seniors who consider technology to be "very important" in health management, 75 percent monitored their weight, 50 percent monitored their cholesterol and 41 percent tracked their physical activity last year. These rates are much higher than those of seniors who say they see no value in using technology to manage their health. (See Figure 2.)

Silver surfers are also an attractive group for Medicare plans because they tend to have higher incomes than their peers. The Pew Research Center reports that among seniors 65 and older with an annual household income of \$75,000 or more, 90 percent go online and 82 percent have broadband at home, both of which are much higher rates compared to this age group overall.²

Investing in silver surfers

With higher incomes and healthier behaviors, silver surfers have gotten the market's attention. Recent trends show significant venture capital investment and innovation in ehealth tools specifically designed to address issues relevant to the aging population.

Reliable barometers for the market overall, digital start-ups are targeting silver surfers like never before. In a report sponsored by AARP, StartUp Health cites record-level funding for digital start-ups focused on the over 50 market—with 2014 investment on track to double that of the previous year when last reported.³

StartUp Health data also suggest that digital start-up investment is well aligned in many cases with silver surfers' health management behaviors. For example, start-ups are investing heavily in vitals monitoring—investment grew to \$266 million in 2013, which was more than 2011 and 2012 combined.⁴ This just as the Accenture survey reveals that three in five seniors are willing to wear a health monitoring device to track vital signs such as heart rate and blood pressure.

A digital future ahead

Not only are silver surfers willing to incorporate a key ehealth channel like vitals-tracking wearables into their lives, they expect that technology will play an even bigger role in their health in the future. Many are even willing to pay for technology tools that provide insights into their health.

Consider that the number of older seniors who rely on online health information resources is expected to increase by over 10 percent in the next five years. Just over one quarter (27 percent) of this group currently relies on EMRs for health information—42 percent expect to in five years.

Start making waves now

By understanding silver surfers' unique ehealth habits and preferences, health plans can identify digital opportunities to encourage healthy activities—and healthy outcomes. In fact, some health plans are already introducing digital health tools including wellness portals and activity tracker programs designed for digital-savvy seniors.

Such digital approaches are important for health plans participating in accountable care organization models that must build care plans to generate the right outcomes to protect against the downside risks of quality or value-based payment models.

Ehealth is poised to help increase engagement opportunities and support complex care coordination of the Medicare population. It is a complement, not a substitute, for the human touch in healthcare—at a time in people's lives when they often need it the most.

² Aaron Smith, Pew Research Center, "Older Adults and Technology Use," April 3, 2014, accessed February 27, 2015 <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/04/03/older-adults-and-technology-use/>

³ Start Up Health Insights: Digital Health Funding for the 50+ Market, 2014 Q3 YTD, <http://www.slideshare.net/sanjaykhurana101/start-up-healthinsightsdigitalhealthfundingforthe50market2014q3ytd>

⁴ Digital Health Insights Report for the 50+ Market, 2013 Q3 YTD, <http://www.slideshare.net/fullscreen/sanjaykhurana101/digital-health-insights-report-for-the-50-market/1>

**For more information,
please contact:**

Jill Dailey
jill.s.dailey@accenture.com

Brian Kalis
brian.p.kalis@accenture.com

Tristan Sather
tristan.sather@accenture.com

Methodology

Accenture conducted a survey of 10,730 individuals in 10 countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Japan, Norway, Singapore, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States) including about 350 US seniors, ages 65+. About 300 of these US seniors were receiving Medicare benefits. The survey was conducted between February 18-March 16, 2014 by Penn Schoen Berland (PSB).

About Accenture Insight Driven Health

Insight driven health is the foundation of more effective, efficient and affordable healthcare. That's why the world's leading healthcare providers and health plans choose Accenture for a wide range of insight driven health services that help them use knowledge in new ways—from the back office to the doctor's office. Our committed professionals combine real-world experience, business and clinical insights and innovative technologies to deliver the power of insight driven health. For more information, visit: www.accenture.com/insightdrivenhealth

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 323,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com

Copyright © 2015 Accenture
All rights reserved.

Accenture, its logo, and
High Performance Delivered
are trademarks of Accenture.

