Why The NHS Should Invest In Blockchain If It Wants To Live Forever

[Gina Clarke](#)

A man shows his love for the NHS as it turns 70-years old. (Photo credit: Wiktor Szymanowicz / Barcroft Media via Getty Images)

Blockchain is transforming medical healthcare around the globe- will the UK be next? Gina Clarke takes a look at what the NHS can learn from blockchain initiatives in other countries.

Medical tourism isn't a new phenomenon, so it is perhaps no surprise that other countries are looking at utilizing blockchain for their own health needs. In the US, with spiraling medical costs, steps are being offered to establish a platform where patients, doctors and clinics can connect worldwide.

Providing a greater sense of choice and autonomy, [Medipedia](#) is already gaining traction ahead of its token sale in October, so what could the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK learn from its model?

No more long waits

The NHS is well aware that linking with other countries can often be more cost effective than allowing long wait times. As the health service struggles with a shortage of doctors and facilities, the months spent waiting means that patients could develop complications, adding further to its burdens. To keep with its mantra 'free at the point of use', alternative solutions must be found.

The current model lacks choice when compared with say the US, where review sites of surgeons are becoming popular, the NHS model doesn't always allow for a preference. With a system such as Medipedia, users would be able to locate good doctors through the information on the site such as success rates or career progression.

Affordable care

The NHS is moving forward, but unfortunately it is at a snails pace. A trial with France has already been established, but what about countries such as Thailand or Vietnam where services are more affordable? With additional costs for priority treatment slowly edging into the system, this portal could effectively allow patients to choose for themselves. They might prefer a long wait at home, or decide to pay a small fee for treatment abroad.

By integrating a system such as Medipedia, the NHS could allow patients to receive quotes and interact with doctors globally, giving further access to more affordable care and a wider spectrum of specialists.

Currently on this platform, [a token called MEP](#) powers the site, but if something similar was used it could also bring revenue to the NHS by allowing adverts on specifics pages or connecting patients with private services.

Privacy assured

The NHS is still reeling from the widespread virus '[WannaCry](#)' in 2017 that left hospitals unable to access patient records. Instead, blockchain technology could be used to keep patient data safe, as part of a multilayered system to ensure patient confidentiality.

For example, Medipedia uses a multilevel security system, with data being encrypted before it is stored on the blockchain. They also discourage users from storing any confidential data locally to prevent personal computers becoming an easy target for hackers.

Users will be provided with a set of guidelines to help them keep their data safe, including advice only to log on via the secure HTTPS server. A large amount of the data will only be able to be accessed after the agreement of multiple parties, using EOSIO's Multisig system, multiple authentication details will need to be entered in order to access data.

This would mean that a doctor and patient would both need to log in for either party to view any confidential data, ensuring the control lies fully in the hands of the data owner.

MyHealthMyData

The issue of privacy is one that the EU has been working on under the H2020 research program. MyHealthMyData (MHMD) aims at implementing one of the first blockchain-based biomedical information network centered on the connection between healthcare providers, biomedical industries and individuals.

It hopes to make anonymized data from hospitals available for research and development while prompting citizens to regain control over their health data through a personal account.

Interestingly, Sweden is the market leader in this category. CareChain is Swedish blockchain initiative, aimed at implementing a national blockchain for health data where users can manage their consent

dynamically and comply with the multitude of GDPR regulations.

A new persona for medical tourism

Of course in the UK we don't have to look far for examples of health tourism, lots of Brits travel to Poland for dentistry or Greece for IVF, and although our own hospitals are starting to offer additional private treatments there is no central place that includes this information and customizes a quote for the user.

In a world where we can shop on Google for laser eye treatment, could the NHS use blockchain to communicate its activities more easily? From inventories to specialists, blockchain could transform the post code lottery aspects of traditional healthcare if it were only given a user friendly interface.

All in all there is a lot to learn from the use of blockchain and blockchain enabled platforms such as CareChain and Medipedia. If the dirty words of 'medical tourism' were replaced by something more caring such as 'collaborative healthcare', it could add a real sense of longevity to the current NHS model.