SXSW 2017
Key Trends & Takeaways
March 2017
WPP Health & Wellness @ SXSW 2017

As always, SXSW 2017 was nothing short of inspirational. Our top WPP Health & Wellness leaders and thinkers attended the Interactive Festival, taking in the hottest sessions and events through a healthcare focused lens.

Our ambassadors interacted with robots, experienced the latest in virtual reality, attended countless sessions, and have curated the major themes observed, and outlined their most valuable takeaways, and actionable insights on what it all means for your business.

We hope you enjoy reading this report as much as we did curating it!

Factoids about SXSW

SXSW is an annual forward-focused gathering of creative minds in Austin, Texas. The purpose of the event is to “create an opportunity for creative people and the companies they work with to develop their careers, to bring together people from a wide area to meet and share ideas.”

The conference first took place 30 years ago with just 700 registrants – now attracts over 70,000 of the brightest thinkers from nearly every industry.
Major Themes

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Chat Bots
3. Ending Cancer
4. The Rise of Women's Health
5. HealthTech: Marathon Not a Sprint
The acronym on everyone’s lips: AI. Artificial intelligence is beyond what many of us ever imagined, and it is powering many of the brand experiences in our future. It’s the brain behind chatbots and will enable the finding of the needle in a haystack. The power of machine learning and cognitive computing to take the vast amount of data that is being created and make sense of it, as well as provide the ability to find new patterns and trends, will change the delivery of healthcare.

**How it impacts you**

With HCPs increasingly challenged by work and time constraints, humanoid support could play a significant role in caring for patients and easing the strain on HCPs so they can focus on the interactions that need a real human’s touch. There’s also potential in learning and even e-detailing. And in some health conditions like autism and Alzheimer’s disease, interactions with a realistic technology like this could truly help in patients’ care.
Giving a face to Artificial Intelligence
Auckland-based, Soul Machines, put some physicality behind AI, to show what it takes to make a (non)human. The team impressively incorporated the muscles of a person’s face into AI so they could have all the emotions and feedback and components of what you’d see in a human being. They also developed a toddler version that reacted to the user’s movements, even beginning to fuss and cry if the user walked away or ignored the child, much like a real child would. But was it creepy? Absolutely.

IBM's Maker's Garage
At the IBM Watson Makers’ Garage, IBM shared how they’re using their technology to make the world healthier, more secure, personal and creative. Watson is helping seniors maintain their independence and dignity as they age and helping doctors get more out of medical data they have access to.
There was lots of buzz around chat bots at SXSW, and it’s easy to see why. When someone’s looking for your brand, their first step is often to Google it, and they’re led to your brand page. Naturally, healthcare brands want to help make this consumer journey even easier, and marketers are taking notice of chat bot technology.

A pop-up offering help to someone looking for details about their newly-prescribed medication or a doctor trying to find dosing information would be very welcome and a great way to help brand engagement.

**How it impacts you**

Designed to engage in conversation and storytelling, bots offer significant work but also exponentially significant payoff for pharma brands. Identify the information audiences are seeking and have the answers to their questions approved and ready. Easier said than done – that’s a lot of MLR review. But for a fully-controlled end user experience that’s efficient and helpful to your audiences, that hard work will really pay off.
Chat Bots: notable sessions

“Conversational Chat Bots - Your Brand’s Duty”
This fascinating panel discussion reviewed how brands are using chat bots to connect with their audience. Panelists analyzed the Activision "Call of Duty" Experience on Facebook Messenger, which hit an excess of six million messages on its first day, the most a branded chat bot has ever achieved.

While the discussion focused on chat bots and gaming, the implications for healthcare communities are obvious. A word of advice: “With chat bots – you have to think ahead – how much data will you need to learn and respond properly?”
Ending Cancer

Look out, cancer. Some of the world’s most brilliant minds are coming for you – and not just in R&D but across technology and government too. Several SXSW sessions made it clear that there’s a bounty over cancer’s head once again, but with so many resources going toward the fight, its days may now be truly numbered.

In the olden days, the smartest people went into medicine. Today, the smartest people decide to go into medicine or technology, and either way, those folks are still focusing their brain power on solving health problems. Perhaps this true “beyond the pill” mentality will be what it takes to finally beat cancer.

How it impacts you

Pharma’s role here is not yet completely set, which signals enormous potential. In addition to already being the driving force of R&D, Pharma can additionally lend insight and innovation across every aspect of the cancer fight – and then use that newly-blazed trail to fight other diseases as well. This pipe dream has more potential to become reality than ever before.
The Urgency of Now: Launching the Biden Cancer Initiative

One of the most transfixed presentations was by Vice President Joe Biden, who came to the SXSW stage to bring others in on his Moonshot rally cry. Launched during the Obama administration with the aim of changing cancer as we know it, Moonshot has become Biden's primary focus and he is using all of his resources to fight the disease that took his son. And with all of the attention the cancer fight already receives, Biden still stands out. As Larry Dobrow of MM&M wrote, “At SXSW, a get-together featuring actual rock stars, Biden blew everyone else off the damn stage.” Truly, we saw more buzz around Biden's presentation than of any other single presentation at the conference.

Watch Biden's full presentation here.
Ending Cancer: notable sessions

Connect to End Cancer
Cancer affects 1 in 3 Americans. Cancer will always exist. What will change is rapid detection and prevention. But that’s not all. Three initiatives will join forces to end cancer deaths once and for all:
• Automation of data
• Exploring combination, immunotherapy (similar to the HIV category)
• Prevention – prophylactic vaccines

Right now, medical information lives and dies where it is created. This is a huge problem and barrier to getting to a cure. Changing this is key, and Joe Biden’s Moonshot cancer initiative is making the journey faster.
There has been a resurgence in feminism that is also paving the way for women's health conversations and opening the door for brands to get involved in the cause. Much of what has supported this resurgence – including the culture of social media sharing, the current US political climate, and technological advances – also have had enormous impact on the way women's health has evolved over the past ten years into the significant changes we are seeing today.
Most of the attention around women's health today focuses on fertility. In other words, it's really lacking a holistic view. But as our culture has evolved into one centered around sharing (and oversharing) on social media, the conversation has changed. Millennials – the oversharing generation – are the driving force behind it, and see no reason to censor their discussion of birth control, menstruation and sexuality.
As previously taboo topics become “ok” to discuss, they enter the realm of innovation. For example, a generation that publicly discusses their periods becomes the generation that voices their disappointment in tampons and begins to demand alternatives, and enable innovators to introduce alternatives like the Diva Cup and period panties to the mainstream. This is the generation that voices their disappointment in the traditional biopsy procedure, and enable innovators to introduce alternatives like NextgenJane, a “natural biopsy” tampon in development that detects endometriosis in a non-invasive manner.

Pharma needs to change the way they communicate to this generation, because among millennials the conversation has already changed. Engage them. Be direct. Be real. That’s how you’re going to win their trust.
Empowering Women’s Health with FHIR (within Title X Program)

Many have called for the introduction and implementation of a national health identifier, which would better allow us to harness and leverage big data to improve on just about everything health-related, from R&D to marketing, treatments to health outcomes. Women’s health/Title X may be the road of least resistance to making this happen, as the Office of Population Affairs’ (OPA) Title X program supports the provision of quality family planning services. As the session summary explains, “to strengthen quality improvement within the program, OPA needs to be able to collect standardized, patient-level data from their 4000 clinical sites. To analyze this data, the variables needed to be in a standard format, despite coming from over 100 different systems.”
How it impacts you
If OPA is able to make this dream a reality, the potential for healthcare companies to benefit is exponential. Imagine what you could do if you had the aggregated health information for the entire country at your fingertips. It's closer than ever to possible, as our current US culture is more supportive than ever before of women's health needs. Pharma is in a unique position to be able to influence change. Lobby government officials to support the OPA initiatives to implement a national health identifier. Use the power of marketing to spread awareness of this cause. And put policies in place now for effective and responsible utilization of big data.
Every conference there is a technology that is THE ‘it’ technology for the year. In years past, it has been 3D printing, wearables, VR, AR to name a few. We noticed that there was little talk about many of these major topics and that maybe it’s because we (healthcare marketers) are giving up on them too quickly and are too eager for instant gratification.

**How it impacts you**
In order to see the benefits of wearables we should think of our programs as a marathon, not a sprint. With VR, there are obstacles to overcome, but we are only at the very beginning of discovering their power.

Health technology is an incredibly dynamic sector, and marketers are always looking for next new technology. We have to find a way to make these technologies scalable and economically feasible.
Virtual Reality Therapy – Treatment for the World

What is VR therapy? It allows people to be exposed to fears virtually, such as flying, in a controlled environment. It works because it is systematic, deliberate, repeated, and prolonged. Whether it is CGI or 360 film, we take patients through the concourse, we can control factor and we gradually expose them to their worst fear.

How do we know it works? Biofeedback measures serves as a proof point.

How can we develop something that is powerful and accessible to use at home? That's the burning question and this is the future. This will ultimately lead to an effective outcome.
Virtual Reality Therapy – Treatment for the World

Self-administered therapy is the future. “As a therapist, my goal is to make me irrelevant. People need to be educated and trained as people aren’t doing it correctly when they are by themselves.”

When panelists were asked “What are you looking forward to with VR?”

- Push the technology so it becomes more premium
- Utilize more tools - minimize the time to create a realistic environment. Broaden the scope to get more content
- Getting out there - 200k people with VR experience in 2008, to 400m in 2016.
- Becomes pervasive in clinics - will replace the Wii games
"What an awful session at #sxsw-endofdisability. Imagine saying end homosexuality or blackness. Disability is culture. Why is this ok?" Carly Findlay, Blogger, Host of Radio Carly, Appearance Activist

"If you don’t invest in companies with women at the top “you must just hate money” Chris Sacca, Venture Investor

"Diversity and inclusion don’t slow things down- they make things more efficient." Candice Morgan, Head of Diversity Pinterest

“What 1997 was to Internet and browsers, 2017 is to bots.” Dharmesh Shah, HubSpot CTO

“It is time owners and startups invested in media literacy to help audiences understand what is true and what is not” Brian Stelter, Senior Media Correspondent for CNN

"By 2020 almost all cancer patients will be on immunotherapy.” Dr. Ronald Depinho, President of UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

“Creativity springs from moments of inspiration, but also from moments of frustration.” Adam Grant, Author, Wharton Professor

“I have one regret in deciding not to run, and that was I would have loved to been the president who presided over the end of cancer.” "I see a day where kids go in for their annual physical and are vaccinated for certain types of cancer." – Joe Biden, Former VP of USA

"If you're a disrupter, you ignore the noise. You've got a vision." Mark Cuban, Businessman, Investor

“We explore or we expire. That’s about it.” Buzz Aldrin, Engineer and Former Astronaut

"It is time owners and startups invested in media literacy to help audiences understand what is true and what is not" Brian Stelter, Senior Media Correspondent for CNN
For more of what our experts are saying...

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Thank You

This report was produced by WPP Health & Wellness with contributions from our agency experts.

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