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Technologies of Care and Responsibility:
Medical Innovations, Doctors and Patients¹

A patient who is receiving a medical care and treatment is one of the main two actors of medical practice whose mate is a physician carrying out a medical care and treatment for a patient. A rapidly growing number of technological mediators between the former and the latter are distinctive features of our time, and those mediators influence the redistribution of roles between patients and physicians.

The paper discusses some of innovative medical technologies of self-care (e.g., self-tracking, self-treatment): (a) the Internet as a self-diagnostic tool; (b) electronic health record systems; (c) home measuring devices which allow self-monitoring of heart function, blood pressure, blood sugar etc.; (d) implanted and wearable body sensors; and (e) other technologies designed to carry out medical care outside a hospital and without a doctor. These devices delegate a portion of patient care to the patient. This delegation, however, gives rise to unpredictable and sometimes undesirable effects, such as the growth of patients' anxiety about self-management of their health and the necessity of making self-guided decisions, or because patients' fear of data leakage and breaches in privacy. Hence, the technology-based growth of medical objectivity and effectiveness results in an unexpected invasion of subjectivity with unforeseen consequences.

The transformation of the patient-physician relationship will be considered in terms of phenomenology of technology—namely, in terms of D. Ihde's phenomenological human-technology-world scheme (Ihde, 1990). I will discuss the phenomenon of growing number of technological mediators between a patient and a physician from two projections: (a) as care from the projection of an intentional act, and (b) as a responsibility from the projection of an intentional object. I conclude that technological interventions in medical practices give us ways to speak about a technological intentionality (Verbeek, 2008).

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