



Digital Medical Services Delivered by Internet Hospitals via WeChat in China: a Qualitative Analytical Research

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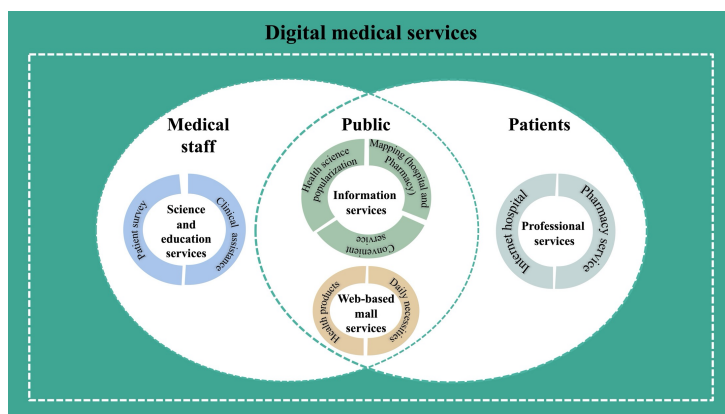
Objectives: The WeChat platform has become the main platform for Internet hospitals to provide digital medical services (DMSs) in China. However, little is known about the service model of DMSs delivered by internet hospitals via WeChat. This study aimed to explore the emerging service model of DMSs delivered by internet hospitals via WeChat.

Methods: This study applied a document research design to analyze DMSs of 25 leading internet hospitals in China. Materials were collected from their official WeChat platforms. Thematic analysis was conducted for data analysis.

Results:

Themes highlighted four key dilemmas when delivering a service model of internet hospitals, including:

- (i) professional service (medical service & pharmacy service);
- (ii) information service (convenient service, health science popularization & mapping);
- (iii) science & education service (clinical assistance & patient survey);
- (iv) online mall service (daily necessities).



All the sample internet hospitals have delivered the medical service and convenient service. Both clinical assistance and daily necessities are delivered by only one sample internet hospital, respectively. Two sample internet hospitals conduct patient surveys to explore patient satisfaction to improve service quality.

Conclusion: The healthcare industry is currently in search of innovative service models of internet hospitals in response to the unprecedented form of healthcare in China. However, the target customer, value offering and services provision of the service model design still remain debatable, the value of DMSs has not been fully realized. The service model of DMSs needs more distinguished innovations to provide personalized digital health and patient-centric services.

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