

Innovation a requisite for health insurance growth



Health insurers are ready to take advantage of the fast-paced developments in technology to find innovative solutions to improve their service, shows the 10th Middle East Healthcare Insurance last month.

By Osama Noor

Innovation is the way forward for the healthcare insurance industry and operators need to keep up with the technological developments to be able to continue serving their markets adequately and sustain their existence, Dr Haidar Al Yousuf, Director of Health Funding, Dubai Health Authority (DHA), said at the opening of the 10th Middle East Healthcare Insurance Conference in Dubai last month.



Dr Haidar Al Yousuf

Dr Al Yousuf observed that new and massive applications of Big Data are developing rapidly with growing sophistication to provide the best service to the population, therefore, health insurers would definitely need to invest in disruptive innovation or eventually be forced to leave the marketplace.

He said the DHA is keeping up with the technological advances in terms of promoting the best and affordable healthcare insurance services through the implementation of online and modern technological solutions.

He noted that the first phase of implementing mandatory healthcare insurance in Dubai, which became effective from 31 October 2014, involved only a handful of companies with more than 1,000 employees.

With the mandatory medical insurance scheme now fully implemented covering all employers, the market has grown to more 135,000 companies with more than 9.1 million employees insured, this is where the market needs innovation to reach out to these people and facilitate providing services to them, he said.

Rewarding better lifestyles

Mr Andre Daoud, Chief Business Officer, NEXtCARE, noted that there is an urgent need to change people's mindset towards embracing a healthier lifestyle. He added that availability and accessibility to healthcare services nowadays make it easier for people to monitor their well-being and thereby promptly respond to their healthcare needs.



Mr Andre Daoud

LIFE INSURANCE – HEALTHCARE



Innovation will continue to disrupt the insurance industry and providers are required to keep abreast with the fast pace of technological development, he said. However, Mr Daoud stressed that technology is not the only element; as innovation and thinking out of the box are as important.

Transforming to the digital age

Mr Glenn Lottering Senior Director, Insurance, Oracle, said the millennials (born after 1980) are very distinctive in how they place themselves at the centre of self-created digital networks. As they account for nearly 30% of the world population, and 89.7% of them live in emerging and developing economies, millennials are the source for future economic optimism.

He noted that the differing level of expectations with millennials requires carriers to think differently including in taking note of their customers omni-channel vision, be relevant through anticipating their needs and excel in providing smooth, clean and intuitive services.

Technology as a service enabler

Innovation and technology would help insurers treat customers more fairly as both offer more efficient means for transmitting information and give consumer better clarity on what to expect from their insurance covers, pointed out Mr Silvan Said, Managing

Director, RISC Institute.

He also raised the issue of whether the availability of data to underwriters would potentially discriminate covering some social segments, and hence, weaken the principle of mutuality in insurance.

Despite the increasing use of automated business process and the huge benefits in terms of cost saving and increased returns, investing in technology is and should not be a substitute to nurturing the human

element, noted Mr Said.

He also said that investing in technology should not be as part of a common fashion, but rather it should be done to add value to clients and help improve their experience.

Organised by *Middle East Insurance Review (MEIR)* with the theme “Evolutionary Innovation: Creating New Markets and Synergies”, the two-day conference attracted around 150 professionals. The event was sponsored by NEXtCARE and Oracle Insurance. [M](#)

