Anthropology of e/m-health and telemedicine: Time to pay attention
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Beyond a critical approach to e-health, effort also has to be put into
understanding how e-health is indeed contributing to better health, especially in remote areas of the world where access to healthcare is difficult. There are indications that ICTs may be useful in public health, such as in epidemiological monitoring and surveillance of illness episodes and medicine use. We can also learn a lot about knowledge transfer through online communities, involving both healthcare practitioners and patients. What is, for example, the impact of the information found on the Internet on doctor-patient relationships, and how are the online health forums a place of negotiation of power and identity?

These and many other questions have led several members of the Critical Anthropology of Global Health (CAGH), a special interest group within Society for Medical Anthropology, to start an initiative and thereby promote the research of e-health. In November 2015, the CAGH group published a ‘Takes-a-stand’ statement on the contribution of anthropology to e/m-health and telemedicine. The statement is a working document investigating the potential role of anthropologists in this important area of public and global health. The intent of CAGH is to encourage anthropologists to look into this rapidly evolving field.

At present, Mark Nichter and myself who are the authors of the statement, are in the process of expanding this text into a full article, and we would like to invite all anthropologists to join the conversation. This can be done by (1) contributing new ideas and references not yet covered in the statement, which is a work in progress; and (2) providing short ethnographies (from 2-10 pages) of your own research or observations of e/m-health that we may post on the CAGH website as examples of research in progress. For further information and submissions, please contact me by email T.Ahlin@uva.nl. We are looking forward to having you on board!

To submit contributions to this column please contact SMA Contributing Editor Megan Carney (megcarney@gmail.com).
Photo caption: Wearable devices to monitor blood pressure and fitness levels are sold in computer and electronics retail stores also in Slovenia (photo by Tanja Ahlin).