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EDITORIAL

Let us do it ourselves[☆]

Façamos nós mesmos



Traditionally, large companies in the medical field present us with “objects of desire”, which are not always genuinely desired applications. Frequently, these proposals are accompanied by a massive marketing campaign (or convincing strategies). Special locations recruit engineers and occasionally, health professionals, to develop (often behind closed doors) new generations of old equipment.

With high added value, these innovations are very expensive and make it impossible for most practitioners to access the so-called cutting-edge technology. We are thus faced with “a nail looking for a hammer”, i.e., a solution in search of an application.

We are aware of the natural potential of Brazil and its chronic underdevelopment with respect to radical innovations. There are a few companies, such as Embrapa and Embraer, that change the way we interact with the environment and the world. Agencies such as FAPESP¹ and associations such as SENAI² seek to bring researchers and companies together. With that, we believe that we can accelerate the application of science in society, while investing in the production of knowledge. The government prioritizes areas it considers to be strategic, and recently launched platforms of knowledge,³ also in order to provide solutions to technological problems. Even with all this activity, the rate of transformation is still slow.

The strategy of doing it yourself (DIY) has been used in the health care area. From technological marathons known as “hackathons”⁴ to international kits,⁵ groups seek to empower local communities to provide solutions that can improve the population’s quality of life.

With the dissemination and simplification of tools such as 3D printers, Arduino, and programming language, even children can be asked to design products.⁶ This reality contrasts sharply with what the medical area is used to calling innovation.

In our environment, we decided to follow this path, and thus we initiated the MedHacker⁷ movement.

This is a university group, linked to the Department of Ophthalmology of Escola Paulista de Medicina, which consists of individuals with expertise in different fields (medical or non-medical). The group encourages creativity and boldness rather than convention and conservativeness, for the good of all.

With a very diverse team, ranging from medical historians to designers, MedHacker proposes to take the concept of OPEN innovation to its boundaries, understanding the human being as the source of knowledge of both the problems and practical solutions in the healthcare area.⁸ Joint solutions are created based on experience, taking into account the usability and utility of products. Materials are modeled and scientific and humanistic criticisms are proposed, focusing on patients and based on a thorough understanding of relevant theoretical bases.

This alternative and contemporary model has produced prototypes and motivated young individuals, who have started companies and banded together into creative incubators. A generation encouraged to create, not simply to consume. This represents one possible path toward sustainability and growth we so greatly need, that could reduce our dependence on technology and point us to a future we create ourselves.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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