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# Telemedicine, a new wave for healthcare sector

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KUALA LUMPUR: The investment in telemedicine has been growing significantly over the years as it is seen as an earnings driver for healthcare service providers, according to Callum Bir, Microsoft Asia-Pacific director of health and social services.

Bir said there is significant growth in telemedicine investment in recent years as telemedicine offers potential for healthcare service providers to unlock the limitations of physical capacity.

On Microsoft's part, he said it had set up a health innovation lab in Vietnam, and also signed a memorandum of understanding with Crest (Collaborative Research in Engineering, Science & Technology) recently to create a health innovation hub.

"We continue to look at expanding this in both markets, as well as roll it out to other markets," he told The Edge Financial Daily after delivering his presentation at the Malaysia Telemedicine Conference 2016 yesterday. The conference was hosted by Monash University Malaysia, the health ministry, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission and Crest, in collaboration with Sunway Medical Centre.

According to Bir, Malaysia is one of the first countries in the region that embrace telemedicine, and he sees huge potential of telemedicine in Malaysia.

Bir sees broader need in the public health sector as telemedicine can reduce the number of hospitalisations, and this in turn saves the national budget.

As for private healthcare service providers, telemedicine helps expand their profit by reducing costs and providing wider coverage, he added.

Thus, unlike financial technology, telemedicine, the use of telecommunication and information technologies to provide clinical healthcare, is not disruptive and it makes the industry more efficient.