**Page ID**:**Introduction to UX**

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**Introduction to UX**

**What exactly is User Experience?**

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At its most basic, User Experience, more commonly known as UX, refers to how a person responds to, and feels about using a specific product—including systems, devices, and services—such as computer applications or websites.

Encompassing a user’s perceptions, emotions, and physical surroundings when interacting with a product, UX is simply the accumulation of a user’s experiences while engaging a product in a given environment.

With that in mind, it naturally follows that a *good* user experience generally means the user is satisfied and pleased after using a certain product, finding it effective, reliable, and advantageous.

On the other hand, a *bad* user experience signifies that the product in use may be difficult, inaccessible, or inefficient, leaving a user feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. More critically, a negative user experience may lead to costly errors and unnecessary risks, both of which are particularly relevant to health care.

Because it contemplates the mosaic of human experience as it relates to user and product interaction, UX is a complex concept, an involved process, interdisciplinary in nature, and rife with jargon. Drilling down to the basics, though, UX is essentially about humans using products in different settings—an examination of human nature, context, and product when evaluating the exchanges between the three.

**Usability vs. UX**

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Surrounding UX is a swarm of lingo and terminology, some of which is foundational to understanding UX. Usability is a term extensively used in place of, or in conjunction with UX. While usability is an intrinsic part of UX, usability and UX are not one in the same.

Usability is the ability to achieve goals or reach outcomes without complication and irritation. It is a measurement of how effective, efficient, and satisfactorily a product functions when in engaged by a user. Dr. Jiajie Zhang, a distinguished professor at the University of Texas Health Center, defines usability as a measure of how “useful, usable, and satisfying” a user finds a particular product.

While usability focuses solely on the interaction between user and product, UX examines the entire context of user and product engagement, including user emotions, physical environments, and organizational or business culture.

Usability measures interaction quality between user and product, whereas UX analyzes the complete human experience that envelops user and tool interaction. In this context, usability is a part of UX —a major characteristic or principle of user experience.

**Human Centered Design and UX**

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Another prevalent term used in the UX universe is human centered design (HCD). By definition, human centered design is an approach to problem solving and design that incorporates human perspectives and reactions in every step of problem solving or designing a solution.

A philosophy and practice geared towards understanding the core needs of the user, HCD strives to continuously integrate human attitudes and viewpoints into the development of systems, products, and services. HCD’s goal is sustained quality improvement of both the problem-solving process and the designed solution.

While UX is ultimately an outcome of an analytical process, a cycle of discovery and evaluation, human centered design is a discipline that uses UX principles, such as usability, in product development.

Human centered designers keep both the user and context of use front and center during design stages, using user feedback and the iterative process (cycling through multiple versions based on discussion and user comments, each better than the one before) to refine their work.

Employing UX principles in design solutions, developers and designers consider user-centered attributes like accessibility, ease of use, and dependability. Safe and dependable products are especially important in the world of HIT, stressing the important role human centered design plays in providing excellent health care.

**Why UX?**

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UX is essential to problem solving and design solutions because it is user focused. It concentrates on human habits and patterns of behavior as it aims to better the experience between user and product. Always considering how a user might feel or how a user’s environment might impact user-product interaction, UX anticipates user responses and reactions. This inclusive, forward-looking approach reduces major roadblocks to workflow and streamlines design solution processes.

With the goal of knowing and understanding the user, UX introduces both empathy and value into problem-solving and design equations. Stepping into the user’s shoes, UX strives to articulate user needs and requirements that are too often underappreciated or excluded. Anchored in the iterative process and relying on continuous feedback from both users and stakeholders, UX maintains the product’s true value by incorporating the perspectives of, and input from all those involved.

**UX Practices and Health Information Technology**

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If UX, at its conceptual core, is the process of understanding users—their abilities, dislikes, values, and work contexts—and improving user-product interaction, then UX practices are the activities centered around evaluating and, ultimately, refining user experience.

When considering UX as it relates to Health Information Technology (HIT), it is essential to remember HIT’s topmost goal: Improving patient care.

Emphasizing patient requirements and quality health care when analyzing product reliability is fundamental to implementing UX best practices in HIT. If the product doesn’t adequately support the provider and boost patient care, then it is safe to say that it needs work.

UX-informed design improvements and product enhancements minimize user-product friction, reduce error potential, and streamline workflow—all of which leads to more satisfied providers and better health care.

Because it is user focused and value driven, UX is a linchpin to the four major aims of optimal health system performance: better patient care; improved clinician experience (by reducing provider burnout and minimizing work stressors); better health outcomes; and lower costs.

When developing and advancing HIT, safety, credibility, and usefulness are integral criteria for UX. On the hectic front lines of patient care, systems and products that are dependable, straightforward, and secure are unquestionable necessities. Providers and clinicians heavily rely on HIT systems, often utilizing them as decision-making aids during demanding and challenging circumstances.

Split second decisions regarding a patient’s health and wellbeing are easier to make when users are comfortable with, and trust the systems and products they are using. This fact alone underscores UX an essential component to HIT development.

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