

Putting patients first

Shirley Xu Runhong, president of Baxter (China) Holding Ltd, Baxter Healthcare, has worked in the healthcare industry for 30 years. Having worked in various senior leadership roles at Baxter, Xu has helped the company deliver on its mission of saving and sustaining lives and continued to promote the sustainable growth of China's healthcare industry.

Her strong desire to continue learning rather than succumbing to complacency is what drove Xu to earn a DBA from CityU. "If you work in the same industry for three decades, it's important to have the curiosity to continue exploring and meeting new people so that you can keep learning," said Xu, who originally graduated from medical school in Shanghai. "Also, during this stage of my career, figuring out how to improve my work and myself through critical thinking and rigid research methodology – that's why I chose this programme."

Xu chose CityU's DBA for its practical programme design and reputation for advancing academic research in the business world.

This was ideal for her thesis, which involved a large-scale study across different medical facilities in China, with the objective of exploring the effect of digital health management tools in combination with self-management activities on quality of life in a chronic kidney disease population. The study had more than 1,000 participants.

She measured the effects of five digital tools: smartphone applications, health management programmes, social media, online health education and smart wearable devices, both at the individual level and in combination with self-management activities.

The study found that the only digital tool to produce consistently positive outcomes individually was smart wearable devices. There were also some "unexpected results", with certain combinations producing negative results. For example, the use of smartphone applications in combination with adherence to medication regimens had a negative impact on quality of life.

"These are interesting



Shirley Xu hopes her findings will boost China's healthcare industry

findings showing that the adoption of digital health management tools in healthcare is just at the nascent stage," Xu said. "I hope that my literature will remind multiple stakeholders – from the hospitals to patients to the community and industry at large – that digital healthcare solutions don't necessarily make a positive impact.

"They might even have a negative impact on patients due to challenges such as a lack of medical knowledge, unreliable digital tools, or conflict between professional medical advice and an individual's lifestyle. Therefore, continuous efforts are needed in this area."