



ETIHAD AIRWAYS TO TEST AIRPORT TECHNOLOGY TO HELP IDENTIFY MEDICALLY AT-RISK TRAVELLERS

News / Airlines



Etihad Airways will partner with Australian company Elenium Automation to trial new technology which allows self-service devices at airports to be used to help identify travellers with medical conditions, potentially including the early stages of COVID-19. Etihad will be the first airline to trial the technology, which can monitor the temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate of any person using an airport touchpoint such as a check-in or information kiosk, a bag drop facility, a security point or immigration gate.

The Elenium system will automatically suspend the self-service check-in or bag drop process if a passenger's vital signs indicate potential symptoms of illness. It will then divert to a teleconference or alert qualified staff on site, who can make further assessments and manage travellers as appropriate.

In partnership with Amazon Web Services, Elenium has also developed 'hands free' technologies that enable touchless use of self-service devices through voice recognition, further minimising the potential of any viral or bacterial transmission.

Etihad will initially trial the monitoring technology at its hub airport in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE, at the end of April and throughout May 2020, initially with a range of volunteers, and, as flights resume, outbound passengers.

Jorg Oppermann, Vice President Hub and Midfield Operations, Etihad Airways, said: “This technology is not designed or intended to diagnose medical conditions. It is an early warning indicator which will help to identify people with general symptoms, so that they can be further assessed by medical experts, potentially preventing the spread of some conditions to others preparing to board flights to multiple destinations.

“It has long been the case that aircraft, with their highly sophisticated air-recycling systems and standards of hygiene are not the transmission vehicle for illnesses. We are testing this technology because we believe it will not only help in the current COVID-19 outbreak, but also into the future, with assessing a passenger’s suitability to travel and thus minimising disruptions. At Etihad we see this is another step towards ensuring that future viral outbreaks do not have the same devastating effect on the global aviation industry as is currently the case.”

Aaron Hornlimann, CEO and Co-Founder of Elenium Automation, said: “We believe this approach is a world first. Elenium has lodged patents for both the automatic detection of illness symptoms at an aviation self-service touchpoint, and touchless self-service technology at an airport. Combined, this would ensure health screenings can become standard across airports, without putting staff in harm with manual processes.

“The system would screen every individual, including multiple people on the same booking. The technology can also be retrofitted into any airport kiosk or bag drop or installed as a desktop system at a passenger processing point such as an immigration desk. We believe the introduction of touchless self-service and automated health screening will encourage passengers to return to travel sooner.”

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