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Digital Health

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Authors:

José Antonio Ruiz Heredia

Teacher:

Nancy Sayre

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1 Emerging Macrotrends in Digital Health Globally

Emerging digital technologies are revolutionizing the way patients and healthcare professionals perceive and engage in medical care. For instance, many macrotrends discussed in class, such as telemedicine, electronic health records, or wearable health devices, are rapidly transforming healthcare methodologies and redefining the way we manage our well-being. However, an emerging trend that will make a great impact in the landscape is **AI-powered preventive healthcare**. This trend leverages artificial intelligence, *Machine Learning (ML)*, and big data analytics to predict, prevent, and manage diseases before they become severe.

1.1 *AI*-Powered Preventive Healthcare

AI-powered preventive healthcare involves the use of predictive analytics and *ML* models to assess health risks. By analyzing vast amounts of past patient data, including *Electronic Health Records (EHRs)*, genetic information, and even cultural, economic, or environmental factors. Traditional screening methods often fail to prioritize patients with higher apparent risk, potentially missing opportunities for earlier disease detection.

These models provide decision making with patient-specific recommendations by identifying patterns that indicate the likelihood of developing different conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or cancer before developing severe symptoms. This approach not only improves clinical outcomes but can also lower healthcare costs by detecting diseases earlier, which reduces the need for expensive treatments later on.

For instance, *Medial EarlySign*, an Israeli *AI* healthcare company, developed a *ML* model that detects *Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC)* earlier than current methods. A 2021 study in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* found it outperformed standard screening protocols. Early diagnosis improves treatment success and survival rates, potentially transforming outcomes for *NSCLC* patients, who typically have a five-year life expectancy post-diagnosis [1] [3].

1.2 How will this Trend Create Change?

AI-powered healthcare helps doctors detect health risks early and provide better, more personalized care. By using *AI* to analyze health data, physicians can make smarter recommendations for assessments such as check-ups, vaccines, and lifestyle changes. This means that each patient receives care that is tailored to their specific health needs.

A major advantage of *AI* is its role in early disease detection. Advanced *ML* algorithms can analyze images, such as *mammograms* or *CT scans*, with high accuracy, identifying abnormalities before symptoms arise. This early detection significantly improves treatment success rates for conditions like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic disorders. Additionally, *AI*'s ability to continuously learn from new data ensures that its diagnostic precision improves over time.

AI also facilitates continuous health monitoring through wearable devices, tracking biomarkers such as heart rate, blood pressure, glucose levels, and sleep patterns. This real-time feedback empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their health. By detecting health risks in real-time, *AI* reduces emergency hospital visits, minimizes healthcare costs, and promotes long-term well-being.

Beyond developed nations, *AI*-driven healthcare solutions hold immense promise for improving accessibility in under served regions. Mobile health applications and *AI*-powered virtual assistants can provide personalized health guidance, bridging gaps in healthcare access. These innovations

empower individuals worldwide with proactive health management tools, ultimately transforming global healthcare by emphasizing prevention over costly treatments [2].

1.3 Risks and Ethical Challenges

AI and *ML* in healthcare have significant ethical challenges, particularly in protecting **patient privacy** and **sensitive medical data**. *AI* systems require vast amounts of data, such as *EHR*s, genomic data, and imaging studies, which could lead to identity theft, medical fraud, and misuse of medical information. Healthcare organizations must prioritize transparency, ethical oversight, and anonymization to protect patient privacy and comply with *GDPR* laws.

In addition, *AI* algorithms may perpetuate health disparities due to **bias in training datasets**, affecting marginalized communities. Healthcare algorithms trained on non-diverse datasets may perform poorly for racial minorities, women, or low-income populations. Predictive models relying on socioeconomic factors could reinforce existing inequities in access to care. To mitigate bias, healthcare organizations should ensure diverse training datasets, use fairness-aware techniques, and conduct regular audits.

Moreover, the opacity of *AI* and *ML* models can hinder trust in *AI*-driven healthcare, as it can lead to skepticism and limiting adoption. To address this, it is necessary to enhance understanding of *AI* decisions, by providing **algorithmic transparency** reports. These reports should ensure all stakeholders can understand and evaluate the algorithms' performance.

Furthermore, the integration of *AI* in healthcare requires rigorous **clinical validation and regulation**. *AI* systems evolve continuously, requiring continuous validation to ensure their relevance and safety. Standardized frameworks for validating *AI* models are crucial, with regulatory bodies like the *FDA* playing a significant role. Collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, regulators, and technology developers are essential for creating best practices for *AI* in healthcare.

Healthcare professionals must evaluate and integrate *AI* technologies while maintaining high patient care standards. *AI* should be used as a **support tool**, ***NOT* a replacement** for human judgment. Physicians and clinicians should be actively involved in decision-making, using *AI* to enhance their capabilities. *AI* recommendations must be interpreted in the context of individual patient circumstances [4] [5].

1.4 Conclusion

AI-powered preventive healthcare represents a transformative macrotrend with the potential to revolutionize healthcare globally. By shifting the focus from treatment to prevention, it can reduce disease risks, improve patient recovery, and make healthcare systems more efficient. However, careful regulation, ethical considerations, and human oversight are essential to maximize the benefits of this technology while minimizing risks. As *AI* continues to advance, we can expect to see even more innovative applications that significantly enhance the preventive healthcare landscape.

2 Trust in Machine Learning Algorithm Predictions

Machine learning (ML) algorithms are becoming increasingly relevant in healthcare, enabling physicians to make more accurate predictions regarding disease risks, mortality, and patient outcomes based on *Electronic Medical Records (EMRs)*. In these models, the decision-making process is often unclear for us, leaving physicians with no deep understanding of how predictions are made. As a result, physicians must decide whether they can trust the algorithm's predictions or if they require a better understanding of the methodology and evaluation metrics behind these models before incorporating them into clinical practice.

2.1 The "Black Box" Problem

The *"black box"* problem in medical *Artificial Intelligence (AI)* systems refers to the inability of users, including physicians and patients, to understand how *Deep Learning (DL)* models make decisions. These *AI* systems, based on *Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)* inspired by the human brain, are designed to handle vast amounts of data and develop self-learning capabilities. Despite their high predictive accuracy, these systems often lack transparent reasoning or explanations for their decisions, which is critical in healthcare where decisions directly impact patient care.

Medical *AI* systems can predict complex diseases or identify hidden health conditions by analyzing massive datasets, but they often fail to explain why or how they arrive at specific conclusions. Physicians face challenges when when relying on *AI* predictions that lack clear understanding and may hide undetectable biases. This issue is particularly concerning in cases where the *AI* system's predictions could lead to significant treatment decisions or the identification of life-threatening conditions [6].

The need to understand the internal workings of *AI* systems and the lack of explanation regarding their decisions can make harder to trust in these tools. For example, the *Deep Patient* system has shown high accuracy in predicting psychiatric conditions, such as schizophrenia, by analyzing *Electronic Health Records (EHRs)* from over 700,000 patients. The system uses a *DL* technique (Figure 1) to identify patterns in large datasets and predict the likelihood of disease. However, while the system performs well in predicting conditions, researchers are still unsure about how it makes these predictions. The lack of transparency in understanding which factors contribute to the predictions poses a challenge for trust and interpretability in *AI* healthcare tools [7].

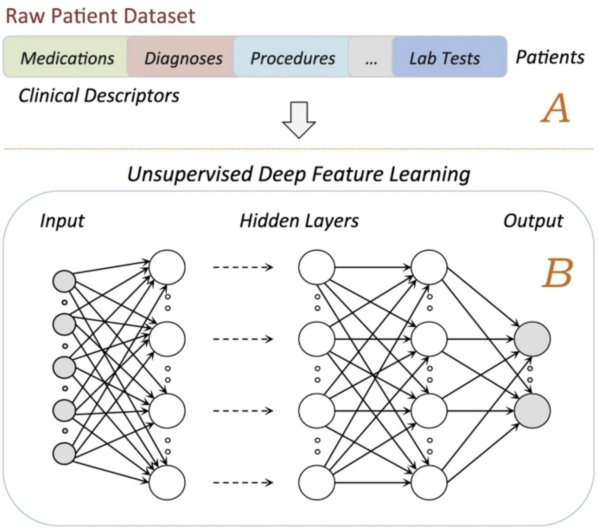

Figure 1: *Deep Patient* model architecture

2.2 Evaluating Algorithm Performance

To ensure machine learning (*ML*) algorithms work correctly in healthcare, their performance is evaluated using different metrics, such as accuracy, sensitivity, *Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)*, and *Mean Absolute Error (MAE)*. These metrics help us understand how well the algorithm predicts outcomes.

In addition to these basic metrics, we also assess the algorithm's ability to distinguish between different outcomes and how closely its predictions match actual results. These steps are usually done during the internal validation phase, where it's important for clinicians to provide input on what performance levels are acceptable in real-life settings. For example, in early warning systems, clinicians might decide how many false alarms are acceptable, ensuring the system provides useful predictions without overwhelming healthcare providers.

However, the algorithm's performance in real-world clinical environments may differ from what was observed in the internal validation phase. To confirm the algorithm's effectiveness, continuous studies are needed to compare its predictions with those made by physician in everyday practice. Concretely, clinical validation studies, such as *Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)* or observational studies, are necessary to prove that the algorithm actually leads to better patient care. Only after these studies can the algorithm be confidently deployed in healthcare practice [8].

2.3 The Role of *Explainable AI (XAI)* in Healthcare

In order to address the "*black box*" challenge and ensure safer implementation of *ML* models in healthcare, it is essential to go beyond evaluating the model's performance metrics. Physicians need clear reasons to trust the decisions made by *ML* models. This trust can only be built if clinicians understand the underlying parameters and reasoning behind the model's diagnosis, allowing them to verify and interpret the factors influencing the model's inferences.

For this reason, *Explainable AI (XAI)* is a rapidly developing area within *AI* that focuses on making complex *ML* models more understandable. In healthcare, *XAI* plays a crucial role in fostering trust between clinicians and *AI* systems. *XAI* addresses this challenge by providing clear explanations about the factors driving a model's predictions. For instance, in disease diagnosis, *XAI* can show which features of a patient's data contributed most to the *AI*'s conclusion.

Moreover, *XAI* can help identify potential biases in *ML* models. Since models can unintentionally learn biased patterns from historical data, it is necessary to ensure that predictions are not discriminatory against certain patient groups.

*(*XAI) techniques like *SHapley Additive exPlanations (SHAP)* and *Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME)* are being used in healthcare to provide insights into how specific features contribute to predictions. This improves transparency and interpretability, bridging the gap between *AI* technology and clinical practice. This increased understanding builds trust in *AI* systems and facilitates their global acceptance and integration into real-world settings [9].

2.4 Conclusion

As *AI* algorithms become increasingly integrated into healthcare, physician trust remains as an unsolved challenge. While *ML* models can provide powerful insights into patient outcomes and risk, their "*black box*" nature can delay the adoption by physicians who are uncomfortable relying on predictions they do not fully understand. To solve this problematic, it is essential to not only receive reliable predictions but also to understand the methodology behind these predictions and have access to performance metrics that demonstrate the algorithm's reliability.

3 Telemedicine to Transform Patient-centered Care

Telemedicine has emerged as a response to relevant concerns about healthcare access, especially in remote regions. It was initially designed to bridge gaps in care for rural communities, tribal populations, and isolated professionals. Nowadays, telemedicine increases its relevance across urban and suburban healthcare landscapes. As technological capabilities evolve and healthcare systems adapt to economic and logistical pressures, telemedicine is increasingly positioned as a potentially practical, cost-effective alternative to traditional in-person care. However, its expansion raises important questions about how it may alter the quality of care, the patient-physician relationship, and the dynamics of the healthcare system. Furthermore, as advanced tools such as AI-powered chatbots are integrated into telehealth systems, there are other issues to consider afecting effectiveness, privacy, and long-term sustainability [10].

3.1 Telemedicine and the Patient-Doctor Relationship

Telemedicine introduces a new dimension to healthcare by enabling remote consultations and monitoring, but it raises important questions about the integrity of the traditional patient-doctor relationship. In-person visits have built trust, empathy, and communication—elements that are difficult to replicate through screens. Cultural factors also play a role; in places like Brazil, patients often prefer to build relationships with their doctors over time. Concerns also arise around sensitive topics, such as mental health or sexual health, which patients may hesitate to discuss through telecommunication platforms due to privacy fears or discomfort.

Despite these concerns, telemedicine can be a valuable complement to in-person care, especially for follow-up visits, test result reviews, and care in remote areas lacking medical infrastructure. It offers notable benefits, such as convenience, cost reduction, and quicker access to specialists or basic health guidance. Studies suggest that while telemedicine is effective for managing chronic conditions and improving certain health metrics, its efficiency is influenced by many factors, including patient engagement, demographic context, and disease type. However, most research highlights the need for further studies to understand how these variables affect outcomes and whether digital care can match traditional care's emotional and diagnostic depth.

Finally, **telemedicine should enhance but *NOT* replace** the human aspect of medicine. Medical institutions must ensure that technological convenience does not undermine patient trust, communication, and compassion. Patients should always have the right to choose how they receive care, and future policies must include their voices in shaping ethical, practical, and emotional standards for virtual healthcare [11].

3.2 Privacy Concerns

While telemedicine presents exciting opportunities for improving access to care, it also raises significant concerns about privacy and data security. As connected health technologies collect and transmit sensitive patient data, they increase the risk of unauthorized access, data breaches, and misuse of information. Current regulations, such as *HIPAA*, are insufficient in covering the wide array of telehealth applications facing apps that may fall outside the traditional oversight. Devices and apps may inadvertently share private details with third parties, or be vulnerable to hacking and malware. To address these gaps, it is needed that th *Federal Trade Commission (FTC)* create and enforce comprehensive privacy and security standards for telehealth systems.

Despite these risks, many patients remain open to using telehealth technologies, particularly when they perceive clear health benefits. Studies show that convenience and access to care often outweigh concerns over privacy, especially for individuals managing chronic conditions. Furthermore, trust in clinicians plays a critical role in a patient's willingness to adopt telehealth. When

physicians actively engage with digital platforms and discuss privacy risks and benefits openly, patients are more likely to participate and stay engaged. Therefore, while regulatory improvements are necessary, provider communication and involvement remain central to addressing ethical concerns and building patient trust in telemedicine [12].

3.3 The Role of Chatbots and AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots have transformed significantly in the healthcare sector, evolving from basic query-response systems to intelligent virtual assistants. Modern healthcare chatbots now support a wide range of tasks such as prescription refills, appointment scheduling, insurance management, and patient education. Leveraging *Natural Language Processing (NLP)* and *Machine Learning (ML)*, these tools offer 24/7 accessibility and personalized interactions, which enhance patient engagement and reduce the administrative burden on healthcare providers.

While the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of *AI*-driven chatbots are undeniable, they still cannot fully replace human clinicians. Complex diagnoses and emotionally sensitive conversations often require human empathy and professional judgment, elements that *AI* currently lacks. Furthermore, as chatbots handle sensitive health information, ensuring data security through encryption and compliance with healthcare privacy laws remains a critical concern [13].

3.4 Challenges and Limitations of Telemedicine

Despite its many benefits, telemedicine faces several challenges that hinder its general adoption and effectiveness. One of the most significant barriers is **limited access** to technology and high-speed internet, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Patients in these regions may lack essential diagnostic tools and reliable connectivity, making it difficult to conduct effective virtual consultations. Additionally, **technical difficulties** such as poor audio or video quality can disrupt communication, while language barriers and cultural differences may further complicate interactions between patients and providers. **Privacy and security** concerns also remain crucial, as telemedicine requires the transmission of sensitive health information over potentially unsecured networks.

Another limitation of telemedicine is its **inability to replicate in-person** examinations and procedures. Remote consultations often rely on patient self-reporting, which may not provide accurate or complete clinical information. This can lead to misdiagnoses or delayed treatment, especially when physical assessments or diagnostic tests like X-rays or bloodwork are necessary. Furthermore, some patients and providers struggle to build **trust in virtual settings** due to the absence of nonverbal cues and the impersonal nature of video calls. Time constraints, restricted access to specialty care, and regulatory limitations around prescribing medication or conducting follow-ups further limit the scope of telemedicine. While ongoing efforts aim to address these barriers, many challenges persist in ensuring equitable and comprehensive care delivery through telehealth platforms [14].

3.5 Conclusion

Telemedicine presents a unique opportunity to enhance patient-centered care by providing accessible, efficient, and convenient healthcare services. However, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding the preservation of the patient-doctor relationship, data privacy, and the ethical implications of using *AI* tools like chatbots. By conducting comprehensive studies, healthcare providers can better understand the limitations and benefits of telemedicine, ensuring that it is implemented in ways that optimize patient outcomes and trust.

4 Gamification App for University

Gamification is an emerging educational strategy that integrates game-like elements into non-game contexts and is becoming a transformative strategy in healthcare education. By incorporating features such as points, badges, leaderboards, and interactive challenges, gamification aims to enhance learner engagement, motivation, and knowledge retention. In the field of biomedical engineering, gamification offers a novel approach to making intricate concepts more accessible and stimulating for students. This approach not only fosters a deeper understanding but also prepares students for real-world applications by simulating practical scenarios in an interactive environment. [15].

4.1 App Design Overview

The proposed gamified app, ***BioLab***, is a gamified app designed for university-level biomedical engineering courses. It combines gamification and immersive technologies to enhance student engagement, knowledge retention, and develop practical skills essential for biomedical engineering careers. The app features role-playing elements, where students assume the role of "*research engineers*" and immerse themselves in real-world biomedical challenges. Each level represents a specific topic within the curriculum, offering complex problem-solving challenges, quizzes, and simulations.

Students earn points for completing tasks and quizzes, which contribute to their overall progress. Achievements are recognized through badges awarded for mastering topics or reaching significant milestones. Students unlock virtual lab tools as they advance through the levels, providing a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

Collaboration and competition are integral components of ***BioLab***'s design. Leaderboards display individual and team performance, encouraging active engagement. Collaborative missions allow students to work together on complex projects, promoting essential soft skills like teamwork and communication.

BioLab's interactive nature addresses common issues associated with traditional teaching methods, such as decreased student motivation and engagement. It emphasizes both technical skills and soft skills, preparing students for the demands of biomedical engineering careers. Future expansion features include multiplayer modes for global collaboration, AI-driven adaptive learning paths, and certification programs that validate skills acquired through gameplay.

Figure 2: *BioLab* Concept Logo [16]

4.2 Use, Users, and Accessibility

BioLab is designed to serve both instructors and students in biology-related courses, providing an interactive and engaging platform for learning. Instructors can use ***BioLab*** to assign weekly challenges tailored to their curriculum, offering varying levels of difficulty depending on the topic being taught. Professors also have access to an analytics dashboard that tracks student performance in real-time, helping them identify areas where students may need additional support. The ability to customize assignments and monitor progress allows educators to create a more personalized and effective learning experience for their students.

For students, ***BioLab*** offers a user-friendly interface that can be accessed via smartphones or web browsers. The platform engages students through gamified learning modules that challenge them to apply what they've learned in real-world scenarios. As students complete tasks and challenges, they receive instant feedback, helping them understand areas of improvement. Visual progress indicators, such as achievement badges and performance streaks, motivate students to continue advancing through the material, creating a dynamic and rewarding learning experience.

In recognition of the diverse needs of users, ***BioLab*** includes a range of accessibility features to ensure inclusivity. The app supports *text-to-speech* functionality for users with visual impairments or reading difficulties. Additionally, the platform is fully compatible with screen readers and offers customizable font sizes and contrast settings, giving users greater control over their learning environment. These features ensure that *BioLab* can be effectively used by a broad range of students, regardless of their individual needs or learning preferences.

Figure 3: *BioLab* User-Friendly Interface [16]

4.3 Evaluation and Personal Opinion

The effectiveness of ***BioLab*** will be evaluated through comprehensive research comparing the learning outcomes of students using the app with those using traditional teaching methods. The accuracy of the content will be rigorously maintained through the use of peer-reviewed question banks and expert-validated simulations, ensuring that the educational material is reliable. Additionally, usability studies and pilot trials will assess the app's reliability and engagement levels, providing valuable insights into how well the platform supports learning objectives.

From a personal perspective, what I find most compelling about ***BioLab*** is its ability to seamlessly blend education with interactive play. It transforms complex biological concepts into tangible, engaging experiences, making learning both enjoyable and effective. However, challenges may arise in keeping content updated to reflect the latest research and in maintaining a balance between the fun, game-like elements and the academic requirements for in-depth learning. Despite these challenges, ***BioLab*** has the potential to revolutionize the learning process by fostering curiosity and active participation, significantly enhancing both engagement and retention of knowledge.

5 The Future of Trusted Health Information

With the rise of digital media and the decline of print media, consumers and patients face new challenges in accessing trustworthy health and medical information. The shift from traditional sources, such as newspapers and healthcare professionals, to digital platforms like social media and online forums has complicated the search for unbiased and ethical health advice. Distrust in government agencies, health institutions, and physicians has further compounded the issue. This report explores how consumers will find reliable health information in the future, the role of advertising in influencing such information, the ethics of health advice on social media, and methods for handling misinformation.

5.1 The Role of Digital Media in Finding Health Information

As traditional print media loses its influence, digital platforms such as websites, blogs, social media, and online forums have emerged as dominant sources for health information. Social-networking sites, including *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*, play an increasingly significant role in providing real-time information and connecting individuals with relevant health advice. Consumers are increasingly turning to these platforms not only to seek medical guidance but also to engage with peer communities and healthcare professionals directly. However, the vast volume of information available online complicates the task of distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources.

Social media platforms also serve as crucial tools for disease surveillance. Organizations like the *World Health Organization (WHO)* use online data sources to track public health outcomes. For instance, the use of geolocated tweets has been shown to enhance the detection of infectious diseases and public health issues, enabling faster responses and interventions. Social media's capacity to provide real-time, user-generated information enhances its potential for monitoring public health trends.

Health organizations and independent researchers should work to ensure that digital platforms are used to disseminate scientifically validated content, and platforms like *Google* or *Facebook* could employ algorithms to prioritize trusted, evidence-based health information. Additionally, specialized health platforms could emerge as reliable destinations for medical information, helping to ensure the public is accessing trustworthy advice. Social media can also serve as a platform for health professionals to interact with patients, share the latest research, and engage with the public in meaningful ways to improve both individual and collective health knowledge [17].

5.2 Advertising on Health Information

Advertising is a vital tool in shaping consumer behavior, especially in health-related decisions. Health and medical organizations use mass media to communicate with patients and the public. Despite its relevance, advertising can potentially promote unverified health claims, potentially influencing consumer choices in unfavorable ways. Healthcare advertising can benefit both providers and patients by disseminating health information and encouraging healthier behaviors.

However, it is crucial to craft advertisements with transparency and ethical standards, including clear disclaimers about potential conflicts of interest. Consumers should be aware of potential bias in health-related advertisements and seek information from trusted sources. Social media platforms and other advertising venues must ensure advertisements comply with ethical guidelines. Healthcare organizations can benefit from sharing industry insights and best practices, improving advertising strategies and minimizing misinformation risks. Carefully regulated advertising can enhance patient engagement and improve communication between healthcare providers and the public [18].

5.3 Combating Misinformation and Providing Solutions

Misinformation in health and medicine is one of the most significant challenges in the digital health landscape. One critical strategy is to redesign social media algorithms to reduce the visibility of misinformation while elevating credible, science-based sources. For example, platforms like *YouTube* have partnered with health organizations to develop guidelines for promoting reliable health content. Technology companies should invest in *Machine Learning (ML)* algorithms to detect and flag misleading health information, and collaboration with public health organizations and fact-checking groups to ensure that false claims are addressed.

Clinicians play a crucial role in counteracting misinformation. Physicians and nurses are uniquely positioned to engage with patients, families, and the broader community by providing accurate, scientifically validated information. Health systems can support clinicians by offering training in effective communication methods and techniques to address and correct misinformation. Regular community engagement through town halls or virtual events can further promote accurate health knowledge and prevent the spread of misleading content.

Additionally, consumer education is critical in empowering individuals to critically evaluate the health information they encounter online. This includes teaching them how to identify credible sources, recognize peer-reviewed research, and spot misleading claims. Governments and health organizations could support these efforts by offering accessible educational resources on health literacy, helping people make informed decisions.

To further mitigate misinformation, ethical guidelines should be established for content creators and social media influencers who share health-related advice. These guidelines should ensure that the advice provided meets professional standards and is based on evidence in order to reduce the spread of harmful or biased health information [19] [20].

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, even though digital platforms create new opportunities for accessing health information, they also present significant challenges. As consumers increasingly turn to online sources for medical advice, it is essential to ensure that these platforms provide unbiased, ethical, and scientifically checked content. Advertising regulations, ethical standards for influencers, and robust methods for combating misinformation will all play a critical role in shaping the future of health information. Finally, addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort between government agencies, health organizations, tech companies, and the public to foster a healthier, more informed society.

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