

The G20 and Digital Health: Using New Technologies to Improve Global Health

The Business for Health Partnership welcomes the G20's focus on digital health initiated by the Saudi Arabia's presidency. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the extraordinary value of digital health tools to tackle health challenges. **The Business for Health Partnership calls on the G20 to implement, in collaboration with the private sector, policies to allow more effective and widespread ethical use of digital technologies to diagnose, treat, and pay for health care.**

The Potential of Digital Health

The global response to the COVID-19 has shown the potential of digital health tools to help patients. For example, in recent weeks:

- Health care providers have turned to telehealth and telemedicine tools to safely diagnose COVID-19 patients remotely;
- Insurers and other private sector groups have developed mobile phone apps to help patients recognize COVID-19 symptoms and learn about treatment options;
- Biopharmaceutical companies are using advanced digital tools, including artificial intelligence, to investigate possible treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, as well as accelerate the collection of data for clinical trials; and,
- Policymakers are benefiting from epidemiological models developed through advanced data analysis tools.

Recent advances in digital health technologies improve patient care in terms of outcome, access and costs. All actors in the health care system – government payers, doctors and health care providers, manufacturers of medicines, medical devices and other health products, insurers, and, most importantly, patients – can benefit from a broader use of digital health tools.

Digital health tools have particular relevance to global goals to improve health equity, achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), improve global health security, and advance patient-centered health care. For example, data analysis tools can help better track patient outcomes and the value of treatments received, thereby boosting the adoption of value-based health care models and ensure greater transparency of care. Remote monitoring, control, training and maintenance are essential tools during the current pandemic and will remain so in building up resiliency. Better tracking of patient records can reduce unnecessary health interventions and improved use of telemedicine can reach marginalized and remote communities.

Yet there remain challenges to the adoption and better use of new digital health tools. These include the need to safeguard patient privacy and data security, regulatory uncertainty that may inhibit the usefulness of digital platforms, and inconsistencies in how different countries and different health care actors approach digital health systems.

G20 Leadership in Digital Health

The Business for Health Partnership encourages the G20 to promote the use of the new digital tools to diagnose and treat patients, enhance the broader healthcare ecosystem, remove policy barriers that hinder their use and adoption, leverage health data to improve care, and optimize the use of health data in regulatory systems. Specifically, the G20 can:

1. Drive regulatory consistency that will facilitate the adoption of digital health tools, including by establishing transparent and fair regulatory frameworks and guidance governing their use, with appropriate adaptive measures in place to account for the dynamic nature of new technologies.
2. Solicit from private sector stakeholders more information on regulatory and other policy barriers that impede the adoption of new health technologies;
3. Convene regular forums to gather digital technology experts across sectors and industries to consider issues, emerging trends, and policy recommendations.
4. Promote cross-border interoperability of digital health, and data systems used for machine readable data.
5. Establish appropriate data security and privacy policies that safeguard digital information yet do not hinder the cross-border flow and utilization of health data for the purpose of research and development and innovation.
6. Support continuous access to scientific discoveries and facilitate appropriate access to national health data sets to support research and innovation.
7. Develop a common G20 lexicon to facilitate the further adoption of digital R&D tools and technologies.
8. Adopt reimbursement systems to fund appropriately new digital health tools, such as payments for telemedicine and digital therapeutics.
9. Promote an innovation ecosystem that encourages new technologies, R&D and collaboration in the digital health sector including innovation in deployment and operationalization of products and services.
10. Create a mechanism for engaging with business to build up preparedness for pandemic outbreaks, and leverage national information centers for disease surveillance, virtual hospitals, and digital therapeutics.