

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF HEALTH SERVICES

Opinion by the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (EXPH)

Digital technologies offer new opportunities for delivering more personalized, effective and efficient healthcare. EU policies have consistently emphasized the importance of digital solutions such as eHealth and have accentuated positive aspects of digital innovations. However, a balanced view of the effects of digitalisation is needed, as not all forms of digitalisation will improve health system performance. The scale of impact, areas affected and complexity of the interactions between digital and health services require careful evaluation.



Are the existing methods best tailored for assessing the value of digital transformation of health services?

Current methods used are based on an evaluative framework primarily developed for pharmaceuticals. Digital health services may require additional and alternative evaluative frameworks, so the existing methods should be adapted to accommodate the evaluation of the impact of digital health services. Assessing the value of 'the digital transformation' is challenging, so the expert panel recommends **building knowledge through methodological advances and evaluations, and making these widely available for consultation.**



What types of data are available and required to assess the value of digital health services?

There is not enough data to fully assess the value of digital services. Even less data will be available regarding the impact of digital services to broader health system goals, such as access, equity, etc. In terms of monitoring, the expert panel advocates **more systematic gathering of key healthcare performance indicators.**



What impacts of digitalisation of health services should be assessed systematically?

While it is impossible, and unadvisable, to systematically evaluate all separate health technologies, a systematic

approach is still important. Ideally, the evaluation should focus also on the most relevant impacts (intended and unintended) related to the intervention, in relation to the objectives of the health system. This should normally include all relevant costs and benefits, inside and outside the health sector.



Should this impact be considered with regards to health outcomes, health systems, the wider society, or all of these?

All of these. A societal perspective in evaluations should be adopted, which means the inclusion of all relevant costs and benefits, wherever, whenever and on whomever they fall. The panel recommends **considering the context when deciding which factors should be evaluated, but all relevant aspects should be included.**



How could the impacts on wider fiscal and social policies, beyond the health sector, be assessed?

The impact for the broader economy and society can be assessed through a societal lens. For instance, one of the indicators measured could be productivity gains in healthy citizens, or in time saved being absent from work due to digital communication with health care professionals. The consideration of who bears the costs or finances the innovation, as well as degree of solidarity (with regard to financing and delivery of care) can also be important indicators.

About the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health

The Expert Panel's mission is to provide sound and independent advice in the form of opinions in response to questions (mandates) submitted by the Commission on matters related to health care. The opinions of the Expert Panel present the views of the independent scientists who are members of the Expert Panel. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission. **For more information and to read the opinions in full:** https://ec.europa.eu/health/expert_panel/home_en