EU Health Policy Platform - Proposal for a Thematic Network on Digital skills for future-proof doctors (Digital Doc)

Scope and relevance

The digital transformation of healthcare is changing the daily practice of doctors in different ways: in terms of organisation, clinical practice and interaction with patients. A wide range of new technologies find their application in health care; medical instruments and tools facilitating e.g. minimally invasive interventions, imaging and image analyses, information technology and smart data technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and biomedical technology.

Current and future technological developments bring unprecedented opportunities to increase the quality of patient care and to organize health care closer to patients homes. Furthermore, new technologies could provide solutions to reduce the workload of health care professionals, and to keep the health care systems sustainable and affordable in the future. To facilitate the use of new technologies, health care systems should be appropriately equipped for its' implementation. Despite very promising opportunities, these new technologies should at all times be critically assessed for their best uses and added value. Availability alone should never be an argument for uptake and use of new technologies in health care.

New technologies are changing the role of doctors, nurses and other medical professionals and the skills and competences they need. Although internationally many educational leaders and healthcare professionals recognize the need, these new skills and competences have not yet found their way into curricula and trainings of our student doctors. Neither have they become part of the continuous professional development programmes offered to health care professionals throughout their career. Much needs to be done in this area of education and training, in order for health care professionals, systems and – not in the least – patients to fully benefit of these technological advancements.

Therefore, Erasmus University Medical Center Rotterdam (Erasmus MC) and the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) organised the Deans meeting "*Training Future Proof Doctors for the Digital Society*" on 12 April 2019 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Deans, educational directors and student representatives from medical schools coming from 25 different European countries, as well as representatives of professional and student organisations, innovators and policy makers actively participated in the meeting. The discussions resulted in a set of principles and recommendations for action (*the Rotterdam principles*) that we propose to take forward in this thematic network. (https://www.erasmusmc.nl/en/patient-care/articles/deans-meeting-april-2019)

Links to EU Policy Agenda

The digital transformation of health and care is a major priority in the Digital Single Market strategy of the EU. The European Commission calls for action to build a healthier society in the Staff Working Document and Communication on Digital Transformation of Health and Care in the Digital Single Market that were published on 25 April 2018. Member States underlined the importance of digitalization in healthcare, especially the use of digital health data, during the informal meeting of health ministers in Vienna on 10-11 September 2018.

The New Skills Agenda for Europe released by the European Commission on 10 June 2016 identifies the health sector as one of the sectors where action is needed to tackle the digital skills deficit in Europe. **Now is the time** to identify concrete steps on how to educate and train our future and current doctors for digital healthcare.

Aim and objectives

Ultimately, the goal is to get technologies being used and implemented effectively and ethically so they will rise to their full potential and will improve patient care and the health care systems substantially. For this, we propose to launch a thematic network on "Digital Skills for future-proof doctors" under the EU Health Policy

Platform (**Digital Doc**). Within this thematic network we will draw up a Joint statement that will further the Rotterdam principles. The joint statement will focus on actions needed to be taken by the various stakeholders in order to prepare future and current doctors to cope with the digital healthcare transformation as well as to integrate digital skills in the education and training curricula of medical doctors.

To reach this aim, the **Digital Doc thematic network** will:

- Use the Rotterdam principles as the basis for the Joint statement and invite the representatives of the medical schools and university hospitals to join the thematic network;
- Build upon the Rotterdam principles and elaborate on the recommendations for action:
  - o to advance digital knowledge, skills and competences as a new core component of training for future and current doctors;
  - o to promote innovative structures and networks to create diversity in digital skills training for medical doctors;
  - o to embed in co-creation training for doctors in institutional digitalisation strategies and policies
  - o to increase interoperability and mobility for medical students, doctors, patients and data;
- Use the already running Digital Health and Data Network and the General Assembly of the European University Hospital Alliance to discuss the draft joint statement
- Connect to the existing networks of the medical schools and university hospitals (amongst others EUHA, EIT Health, ECHO, the ERNs) to create synergies and exchange ideas and get further input on the draft joint statement
- Collect and share best practices of policy and support mechanisms and the actual implementation of digital knowledge, skills and competences in medical education
- Organise webinars for further discussion, input and the development of the Joint statement
- Physical meeting in the second half of the year, possibly in conjunction with the German Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Confirmed thematic network partners

- European Junior Doctors Association
- European Medical Students' Association
- Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin (GE)
- Charles University (CZ)
- Erasmus University Medical Center Rotterdam (NL)
- Helsinki University Hospital (FI)

- Hospital of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences Kauno klinikos (LT)
- Jagiellonian University (PL)
- Karolinska Institutet (SE)
- KU Leuven (BE)
- King's College London (GB)
- Medical University of Vienna(AT)
- Medical University Sofia (BG)
- Scientific Institute San Raffaele (IT)

- Trinity College Dublin (IE)
- University of Helsinki (FI)
- University of Ljubljana (SI)
- University of Nicosia Medical School (CY)
- University of Coimbra (PT)
- University of Tartu (EE)
- University of Zagreb School of Medicine (HR)
- Vita-Salute San Raffaele University (IT)

Possible thematic network partners

- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (GR)
- Iuliu Hatieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy (RO)
- Pavol Jozef Šafárik University (SK)

- Riga Stradiņš University (LV)
- Semmelweis University (HU)
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ES)
- Université Paris Diderot (FR)
- University of Copenhagen (DK)

- University of Luxembourg (LU)
- University of Malta (MA)
- University of Oslo (NO)
- Standing Committee of European Doctors

Leading organization
Erasmus MC is the largest medical school in the Netherlands. (www.erasmusmc.nl)

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