

Health in the 21st century: data, policy, and digital technology

21 November 2019 – Langelinie Pavillon, Copenhagen, Denmark

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This High-Level Policy Forum will bring together Ministers, policy makers, civil society, patients, providers, regulators and business representatives to discuss how digital technology can be harnessed to achieve the best outcomes for patients and communities. The aim is to advance policy approaches that exploit the potential of digitalisation for better health services, while managing its challenges and risks. The focused agenda addresses the key topics of interest to policy makers. Sessions are structured to enable learning from experts, ministers and policy makers as well as fostering open and frank discussions about successes, failures and lessons learnt across OECD member countries. The Ministerial lunch will enable senior officials to network and exchange information.

8.00am Registration opens

9.00am Opening remarks

Opening by host Minister and Deputy Secretary General of the OECD.

9.30am Reforming service models to make health systems more people-centred

This session will invite all participants share learning on integrating promising new approaches in both care and health into complex health systems sustainably, in a way that reduces health disparities.

Digital transformation in health is here. New innovations – from machine learning algorithms that assist with diagnosis and treatment, Big Data analytics to identify better therapies and preventative interventions for individuals as well as populations, edge computing that allows faster and detailed analysis closer to the source, and facial recognition software helping diagnose rare diseases – bring huge potential to meet a range of health policy objectives. While some innovations have been implemented at practice level, tend to focus on clearly defined populations. Policy makers continue to struggle with implementing these opportunities at scale throughout health systems to drive health improvement across entire populations, in an inclusive and people-centred way.

Questions for discussion will include: To take full advantage of digital health opportunities for service improvement and better outcomes what challenges remain unaddressed? What new policies, mechanisms and institutions are needed to ensure that innovative approaches serve the interests of all patients and communities? How have countries managed the impact on expenditure? What can we learn from other industries where digitalisation (especially innovative use of data) has delivered better, faster and cheaper services or products to consumers across the globe?

10.45am Break

11.15am Transforming the health workforce

This session will explore how health workforce and labour markets, as well as skills, policies and cultures must adapt to maximise the opportunities of digitalisation; and how digitalisation can be reconciled with maintaining the all-important personal touch.

The growing digitalisation of health services as well as technologies such as machine learning and robotics, smart homes and remote care will profoundly affect the health workforce. The promise of better efficiency, productivity and precision offered by emerging technologies also means disruptions and challenges around long-established profession categories, provider confidence and scope of practice. These developments, accompanied by ageing populations, require changes in the organisation of work, skills and professional training of healthcare workers. However, health labour markets remain inflexible – whether it is restricted entry into employment through controlled access to training ('numerus clausus' rules); rigid and outdated allocation of tasks; professional self-regulation failing to curb unwarranted variation in care; or education and training of healthcare workers failing to evolve with the changing trends, needs and technologies of the 21st century.

Questions for discussion will include: What skills and attributes are necessary in a data-driven, knowledge-based health system? What policies are needed to equip the health workforce with the necessary skills and allow them to adapt and up-grade their skills during their professional lives? What new roles and professions might emerge and how can health systems prepare?

12.30pm Lunch

There will be a private lunch for Ministers and Heads of Delegation sponsored by the Government of Switzerland, as well as an open lunch for all participants.

2.30pm Keynote

3.00pm Using data in the public interest

This session will draw on experiences of countries that have used existing and emerging data governance mechanisms to promote the secure and respectful use of personal health data within and across countries.

Fundamental issues of privacy, cybersecurity and consent remain constant concerns. Failing to implement mechanisms to protect personal health data and informing patients how their data are managed – including the OECD Council Recommendation for Health Data Governance and within Europe the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – can derail potential dividends, curtailing the use of digital technology for public health goals.

Questions for discussion will include: What challenges and setbacks have been faced, and lessons learnt from managing those issues? How have countries been successful in discussing with the public, patients' group and the media the benefits and risks of using of personal health data to advance policy objectives?

4.30pm The way forward

Ministerial panel to discuss key take homes and lessons learnt for leveraging data and digital technology for improving health policymaking.

5.30pm Closing Remarks