



Health inequalities and eHealth

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OVERVIEW

Presentation outline

- › Background info re: EPHA & eHealth Stakeholder Group (EHSG)
- › Context: EHSG report on 'Health inequalities and eHealth'
- › Barriers experienced by patients / consumers & vulnerable groups
- › Barriers experienced by health professionals / providers
- › Industry solutions tackling identified barriers
- › Transferable good practices (EU, national, regional eHealth policy)
- › EHSG Recommendations



WHO ARE WE?

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)....

- is a network representing the public health community throughout Europe
- comprises +/- 90 member organisations in EU-28/EEA, EU applicant and candidate countries & beyond
- represents interests of disease-specific organisations (e.g. cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory, HIV/AIDS, mental health), health professionals (e.g. nurses, doctors, pharmacists), vulnerable groups (e.g. older people, children, migrants, Roma), regions, academics...
- advocates for more citizen involvement and transparency in political decision-making processes on health policy at EU level



WHO ARE WE?

EPHA....

- Mission: to bring together the PH community; provide thought leadership and facilitate change; build capacity to deliver equitable solutions to European PH challenges; improve health and **reduce health inequalities**
- Vision: a Europe with universal good health and well-being, where **all have access** to a sustainable and high quality health system: A Europe whose policies and practices contribute to health, within & beyond its borders
- Values: **equity, sustainability, diversity, solidarity, universality, good governance**



EHSG

Background / activities

- +/- 30 organisations appointed by European Commission for 3-year period
- Expert representatives of European umbrella organisations active in eHealth, including industry and civil society
- 4 subgroup reports: interoperability, patient access to EHRs, telemedicine deployment, **health inequalities & eHealth** (issue leader: EPHA)
- <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/commission-publishes-four-reports-ehealth-stakeholder-group> (11 April 2014)
- Supporting implementation of **2012-2020 eHealth Action Plan** and relevant key actions of the **Digital Agenda for Europe**
- How to achieve **'triple win'** of patient empowerment, health service effectiveness, market access (mHealth)?



EHSG SUBGROUP

Acknowledgements

Organisations



European Level



Associations

Consumer representatives



Industry

Civil Society



Health Professionals



Patient representatives



Health: a dynamic sector

Context

- Ageing European society, increase of chronic diseases & multimorbidity
- Technological & scientific progress, incl. ICT and personalised medicine
- Better informed patients with higher expectations
- Integrated care model
- Health system reform: from treatment to prevention / health promotion
- Cross-border healthcare provision
- BUT: health professional shortages & migration, increased workloads, constrained budgets, staffing / salary cuts, austerity measures...



EHSG REPORT

Health Inequalities & eHealth

Purpose

- Provide DG CONNECT with stakeholder input as to why it is crucial to pay close attention to link between health inequalities and eHealth, and ensure this is explicit in eHealth and related policy discussions
- Present a snapshot of how these issues are being addressed & tackled across Europe at policy and industry level
- Provide key references, stimulate dialogue and future research at EU level



EHSG REPORT

Health Inequalities & eHealth

Quotes

‘Although the ‘digital divide’ appears to be narrowing slowly but steadily as far as access to technology is concerned, at least in the richer MS and thanks to mobile devices, the **knowledge gap** between proficient and inept users is becoming ever wider (...)’

‘*Every European Digital (...)* is still a long way off, not least given the **pronounced differences in wealth, technology deployment and acceptance** both between and within Member States’

‘The ultimate risk is that **the flaws of the traditional health system will be reflected and potentially even aggravated online**’



eHealth Task Force Report

Redesigning health in Europe for 2020

Lever for Change # 5, 'Include Everyone':

'The main preconditions (...) are political and regulatory commitment to **reduction of health inequalities**; with professionals, providers, and payers ensuring **no discrimination** in provision of care, **equity of access** and in using eHealth tools; and citizens and patients **having an understanding** of health and basic IT literacy'



Non-traditional end users / people (potentially) outside reach of eHealth tools:

- ❖ Geographically excluded (e.g. rural, peripheral areas)
- ❖ Poor / homeless
- ❖ Unemployed
- ❖ Individuals with little or no formal education
- ❖ Patients suffering from specific diseases / conditions
- ❖ Physical / mental / learning disabilities
- ❖ Migrants (including undocumented), discriminated and / or transient ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma communities)



eHealth

Patients / consumers & vulnerable groups

e/mHealth tools and apps: **empowerment** through better information & 'co-production of health', remote monitoring & telecare, exchanges via social media, direct contact with HCPs, ambient assisted living solutions, ease of mind, overcoming isolation, more choice, etc.

BUT

- (Access, affordability, user-friendliness...)
- Patient safety: incorrect data, erroneous use of gadgets, differences in accuracy and capability (sound, vibrations, light, etc.),
- Importance of expert professional advice, e.g. incorrect self-diagnosis leading to bad decision-making, self-harm
- Marketing unhealthy behaviours to children, vulnerable groups



eHealth

Patients / consumers & vulnerable groups

- Stress & technological pressure
 - Shifting personal / professional boundaries
 - Constant need to purchase / upgrade ICT devices and software
 - Multiple communication channels
 - Blogs & fora causing anxiety
- Practicability
 - Engagement / time required to integrate common tasks into routines? (ex. banking, eCommerce – fast, straightforward, little reflection)
- Next of kin & informal carers working on their own
 - What role for low tech solutions and social innovation?
- Individuals wishing to 'opt out'
 - Reasons ('no interest' vs. worries over data protection)?
 - Consequences? Alternatives?



Literacy

Digital health literacy is complex and involves a number of different literacies that require cognitive and behavioural competences applied simultaneously:

- basic literacy (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, numeracy)
 - digital literacy (using and navigating ICT tools and Internet)
 - media literacy (finding and distinguishing between information sources)
 - health literacy (being able to understand, contextualise, appraise and act upon health information)
- health skills are also by-products of formal education....

How meaningful is online health information to non-traditional ICT users?
How can it become more relevant, user-friendly, tailored and inclusive?



mHealth





eHealth

Health professionals / providers

Work-related tools and apps: **improving** administration, avoiding duplication, reducing errors, supporting HCPs at bedside, enabling real-time monitoring, collaboration, reducing consultations / hospital stays, better treatment compliance, etc.

BUT

- (Interoperability, legal & technical issues, data protection, safety, quality...)
- ICT cannot replace face-to-face contact necessary to understand condition-specific subtleties, interactions, etc.
- Proper integration of ICT into work schedules, no add-on 'eHealth bureaucracy'
- Resources for education & training to use ICT effectively
- New communication skills (e.g., direct communication with patients)



eHealth

Health professionals / providers

- Need polyvalent health professionals with both generic and specific competences (as opposed to specially trained 'IT managers')
- Gender issues
- Clear responsibilities and boundaries (e.g. liability)
- Reimbursement
- Capacity & know-how (e.g. managing Structural Funds)
- Impact assessments to avoid 'competition' with other health investments
- Role of regional / local authorities in identifying obstacles / opportunities



eHealth

Health inequalities offline & online

Importance of policy coherence

- Communication 'Solidarity in health: reducing health inequalities in the EU' (2009)
- Europe 2020 strategy for 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (2010)
- European Parliament Resolution 2010/2089 (INI) on reducing health inequalities in the EU drafted by MEP Estrela (S&D, Portugal)
- 'Health inequalities in the EU' Report for EC led by Sir Michael Marmot (2013)

They must also be (explicitly) considered when health goes digital!



Industry solutions

- 'Apps' – health & well-being on the go: **new engagement via personalisation?**
- **Creative adaptation**, e.g. texting, video, photos, pictograms, GPS...
- **Transcending language barriers** (multilingual content, translation tools, keyboards, etc.)
- **Voice-generated content** for users with disabilities, visually impaired; 'lip reading' software
- **Convergence of technology** allows remote monitoring of chronic conditions, early detection, falls prevention (sensors, robots, ...)
- **Online prevention, treatment & support**, e.g. e-Mental health, unhealthy behaviours
- **Virtual** visits, HCP consultations, wards, VR simulations...



Industry solutions

- 'Serious' gaming / exergaming
interactive & fun, encouraging self-control, competition
- Use of SMS in health campaigns
(developing world)
- Access in non-traditional settings
combats misconceptions
associated with formal learning
- Integration of multiple functions
enables mobility, transnationalism
- ICT creates novel competences
that become mainstream later
- Ultimately, increasing no of
people in reach of healthcare in
cost-effective and convenient way
(e.g. video consultations with
GPs)
- (...)



eHealth

Transferable good practices

Examples from

- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Spain
- Netherlands
- Denmark
- ...



Past / ongoing EU Projects



To be continued.... National / regional eHealth strategies addressing health inequalities and demonstrating policy coherence, industry tools designed for target groups, blended care solutions, good practices re: eInclusion...



eHealth

EHSG Recommendations

- Improve access to eHealth and involve all stakeholders
- Accommodate diverse needs & reduce technological pressure
- Improve digital health literacy
- Integrate eHealth into overall health and social care system policy
- Evaluate the impact of eHealth solutions and build up evidence base
- Give particular consideration to empowering patients with disabilities / specific diseases
- Consider financial subsidies for the purchase of eHealth equipment / ICT access



Thank you for your attention

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