

eHealth standardization and interoperability

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on eHealth and health Internet domain names,¹

RECOMMENDS to the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA58.28 on eHealth;

Recognizing that information and communication technologies have been incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals;

Recognizing that the Regional Committee for Africa adopted resolution AFR/RC60/5 on eHealth in the African Region and that the 51st Directing Council of PAHO adopted resolution CD51.R5 on eHealth and has approved the related Strategy and Plan of Action;²

Recognizing that the secure, effective and timely transmission of personal data or population data across information systems requires adherence to standards on health data and related technology;

Recognizing that it is essential to make appropriate use of information and communication technologies in order to improve care, to increase the level of engagement of patients in their own care, as appropriate, to offer quality health services, to support sustainable financing of health-care systems, and to promote universal access;

Recognizing that the lack of a seamless exchange of data within and between health information systems hinders care and leads to fragmentation of health information systems, and that improvement in this is essential to realize the full potential of information and communication technologies in health system strengthening;

Recognizing that, through standardized electronic data: health workers can gain access to fuller and more accurate information in electronic form on patients at the point of care; pharmacies can receive prescriptions electronically; laboratories can transmit test results electronically; imaging and diagnostic centres have access to high-quality digital images;

¹ Document EB132/24.

² See document CD/13.

researchers can carry out clinical trials and analyse data with greater speed and accuracy; public health authorities have access to electronic reports on vital events in a timely manner, and can implement public health measures based on the analysis of health data; and individuals can gain access to their personal medical information, which supports patient empowerment;

Recognizing that advances in medical health care, coupled with an exponential increase in the use of information and communication technologies in the health sector and other related fields, including environment, have brought about a need to collect, store and process more data about patients and their environment in multiple computer and telecommunication systems;

Recognizing that the electronic collection, storage, processing and transmission of personal health data require adherence to the highest standards of data protection;

Recognizing that the electronic transmission of personal or population data using health information systems based on information and communication technologies requires adherence to standards in health data and technology in order to achieve a secure, timely and accurate exchange of data for health decision-making;

Emphasizing that scientific evaluation of the impact on health care outcomes of health information systems based on information and communication technologies is necessary to justify strong investment in such technologies for health;

Highlighting the need for national eHealth strategies to be developed and implemented, in order to provide the necessary context for the implementation of health data standards, and in order that countries undertake regular, scientific evaluation;

Recognizing that it is essential to ensure secure online management of health data, given their sensitive nature, and to increase trust in eHealth tools and health services as a whole,

1. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to consider, as appropriate, options to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including national authorities, relevant ministries, health-care providers, and academic institutions, in order to draw up a road map for implementation of health data standards at national and subnational levels;

(2) to consider developing, as appropriate, policies and legislative mechanisms linked to an overall national eHealth strategy, in order to ensure compliance in the adoption of health data standards by the public and private sectors, as appropriate, and the donor community, as well as to ensure the privacy of personal clinical data;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General, within existing resources:

(1) to provide support to Member States, as appropriate, in order to integrate the application of health data standards and interoperability in their national eHealth strategies through a multistakeholder and multisectoral approach including national authorities, relevant ministries, relevant private sector parties, and academic institutions;

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

- (2) to provide support to Member States, as appropriate, in their promotion of the full implementation of health data standards in all eHealth initiatives;
- (3) to provide guidance and technical support, as appropriate, to facilitate the coherent and reproducible evaluation of information and communication technologies in health interventions, including a database of measurable impacts and outcome indicators;
- (4) to promote full utilization of the network of WHO collaborating centres for health and medical informatics and eHealth in order to support Member States in related research, development and innovation in these fields;
- (5) to promote, in collaboration with relevant international standardization agencies, harmonization of eHealth standards;
- (6) to report regularly through the Executive Board to the World Health Assembly on progress made in the implementation of this resolution.

Fourteenth meeting, 28 January 2013

= = =