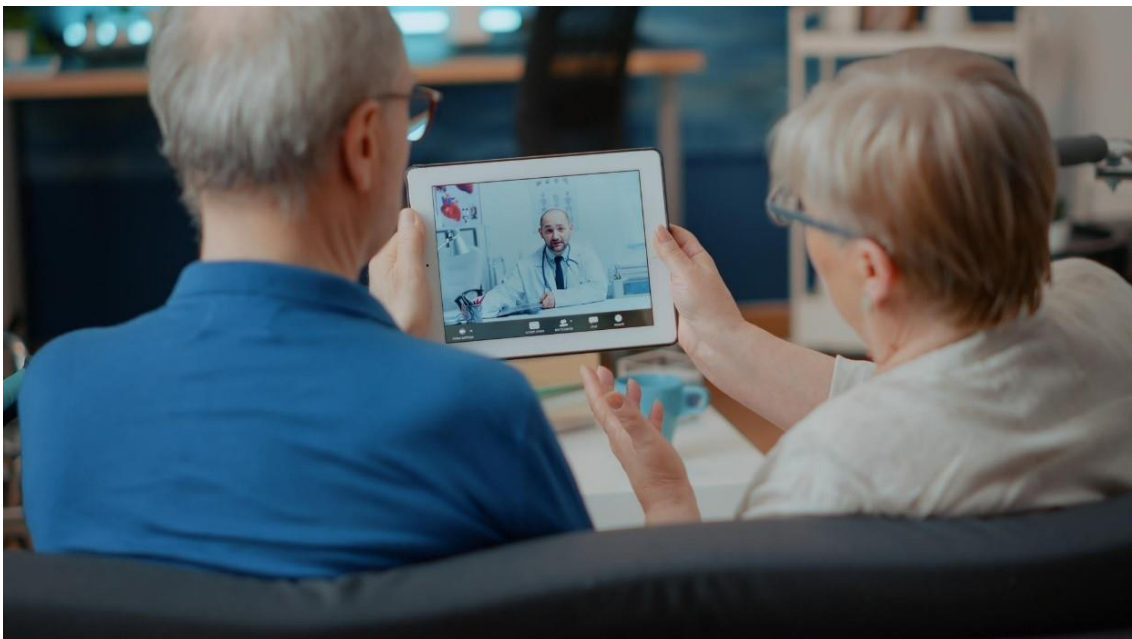


Geneva, 10<sup>th</sup> of November of 2022

## **WHO publishes a guide for operating effective telemedicine services**

- The international report provides an overview of the essential planning, application and maintenance processes for investing in telemedicine and providing financial support to countries that are implementing it.
- Several eCAN Work Packages will benefit from these tips and recommendations.
- A WHO study shows that telemedicine implies better clinical outcomes, better follow-up by healthcare professionals, and an overall benefit for both patients and healthcare workers.



*Patients attending a medical visit from their house. / Freepik*

The World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) has recently published a guide intended for **healthcare services that use telemedicine** to treat their patients. The [report](#), entitled “Consolidated telemedicine implementation guide”, addresses the key steps and considerations to implement this discipline effectively and optimize its benefits and impact.

Its content will be useful for various eCAN Work Packages, especially those that are developing the pilots and the protocol of the Joint Action, but also the ones in charge of risk mitigation, key performance indicators and stakeholders' engagement.

"For telemedicine to have the most impact when and where it is needed, the enabling environment is critical. Investments in national policies, governance, and standards are important to have in place," says **Alain Labrique**, Director of the WHO Department of Digital Health and Innovation. "This guide is not a stand-alone solution, but rather a complementary tool that works in tandem with user-centered solutions that are accessible by all, towards delivering high-quality remote care that is accountable and suitable to the context in which patients live."

## **Towards the implementation of remote medicine**

Aiming to be a key reference for Member States, this new resource supplements the **WHO Digital Investment Implementation Guide (DIIG)**, which provides a systematic process for planning and implementing digital health interventions. It outlines practical steps countries can take through a process of planning, implementing, maintaining and budgeting a telemedicine programme to obtain equitable health outcomes.

"Telemedicine is an important tool that expands access to critically needed health services, but we need to be mindful of the inherent inequities where access to the technology is limited or where there is the potential for harm. This guide aims to support countries to deliver telemedicine services, while highlighting approaches to optimize and improve health for all", comments **Pascale Allotey**, Director of WHO Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research, whose team has contributed to the development of the guide.

Although the case studies in this guide are not from European countries, telemedicine also brings benefits to patients in the EU. This is the conclusion reached by a [study](#) published between the WHO and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) that analyses data from over 20.000 patients during the pandemic started in 2019. "We see better clinical outcomes, better follow-up by healthcare professionals, and an overall benefit for both patients and healthcare workers", says David Novillo-Ortiz, Regional Adviser on Data and Digital Health and lead author of the research.

## An opportunity revealed by the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a spotlight on how telemedicine can help to deliver healthcare to all, especially for people living in **remote areas and underserved communities**. Countries around the world have struggled, however, to ensure routine use and long-term sustainable access to telemedicine services – even in those with the most robust health systems.

In order to ensure the sustainable use of telemedicine beyond the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and amongst multiple complex global health challenges, from conflict and disease outbreaks to climate change, WHO has released this new resource to help guide policy-makers, decision makers, and implementers in designing and overseeing telemedicine implementations.

### References:

Bento, P. et. al. "[Consolidated telemedicine implementation guide](#)". World Health Organization (2022).

Saigí-Rubió F, et. al. "[The Current Status of Telemedicine Technology Use Across the World Health Organization European Region: An Overview of Systematic Reviews](#)". J Med Internet Res (2022).

## ABOUT eCAN Strengthening eHealth for Cancer Prevention & Care

The eCAN Joint Action aims to provide a framework of recommendations for the integration of telemedicine and remote monitoring in health care systems. The objective is to reduce cancer care inequalities across the European Union, particularly for cross-border emergencies and health crises, such as COVID-19.

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