

The Power of Digital Health Records: Proposal to Connect CNIC with Health Data in Pakistan

Ayesha Shahid¹, Obaid Ullah Ahmad², Makiya Sharif³

¹Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore, ²University of Texas, Dallas, Richardson Texas, USA, ³Mayo Hospital Lahore.

Twenty first century is an era of modernization and digitization. With the digitization of data worldwide, things have become easier. Now, it has become easy to deal with the challenges of healthcare system as well. Globally, healthcare system has also been digitized. Hence, it is now pressing priority to transform health records from manual to digitization in Pakistan in order to achieve efficient and effective healthcare delivery. The Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), which is being issued by Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), is a unique 13-digit identifier for every Pakistani citizen.¹ This well coordinated identification system can be used to integrate health records and digitize health system to facilitate robust health outcomes for our population which is now over 231 million.

The doctor-to-patient ratio in Pakistan is unbalanced with 0.83 physicians per 1000 people. Hence, digitization of health is desideratum.² Moreover, digitized records make it easier to share patient information between healthcare providers, which can lead to better coordination of care, especially for patients who receive care from multidisciplinary team. This can also reduce the chances of duplicating medical tests and treatments, resulting in cost effectiveness for patients. Additionally, it will also save the time of the doctors manifolds if they do not have to perform all the tests to be aware of patient's medical history.

Using the CNIC as the universal patient identifier could be a game-changer. With each citizen's health record linked to their CNIC, doctors would have immediate access to a patient's complete medical history, facilitating prompt and informed decision-making. This would lead to more effective diagnoses, personalized treatment plans, and

improved patient care overall. Privacy and security concerns around health data are valid and substantial. However, the digital framework that supports the CNIC system has proven to be secure and reliable. Handling sensitive health data can become safe by implementing this cogent infrastructure. To ensure its safeguarding, its use should be limited by authorized health personnel for medical purposes only, following strict regulations.³

Many countries have already digitized their health record. Estonia, for instance, has organized its 99 % health data in digital form, which has lead to improved health outcomes and operational efficiencies⁴. Pakistan can unfold similar success, thereby empowering their doctors as well as patients by revolutionizing the health care system.

To make this practical, stakeholders, health care providers, IT experts must set an inclusive dialogue. Further challenges including infrastructure requirements, digital literacy awareness, confidentiality issues and legal frameworks can be raised and they can be addressed by policymakers and IT experts. Its high time for Pakistan to integrate its health system with CNIC system to foster the health system where every citizen has a secure, comprehensive and accessible digital health record just a click away.

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Corresponding Author:

Ayesha Shahid

Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology,
Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore.

Email: ayeshashahidred@gmail.com

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