

Building healthier digital futures with information integrity

Report of World Health Summit 2025 side event

October 2025



This report has been made possible by financial contribution from Fondation Botnar, Switzerland, to the Project IMG-22-005 “Digital Transformations of Health Lab (DTH-Lab). Their commitment to advancing global health is deeply appreciated, and this project would not have been possible without their contribution. DTH-Lab is hosted by Université de Genève (UNIGE), Switzerland. DTH-Lab is committed to ensuring and enabling Global Access. The knowledge and information gained from the Project will be promptly and broadly disseminated and its ‘Funded Developments’ will be made available and accessible free of costs. The Global Access Commitments will survive the term of the Project.

Suggested citation: Digital Transformations for Health Lab (2025). Building healthier digital futures with information integrity. Report of World Health Summit 2025 side event. Geneva: Digital Transformations for Health Lab.

Introduction

The global health community widely recognizes the potential for digital transformations to strengthen health systems and accelerate universal health coverage. However, as digital technologies and artificial intelligence become embedded in all aspects of our lives, awareness is also growing about health risks associated with the digital world. Digital determinants of health encapsulates how different features of digital transformations can positively and negatively influence health-related behaviours, health outcomes and healthcare delivery.

Online misinformation and disinformation about health, amplified by algorithms and viral content, pose serious risks to public trust, clinical decision-making and the achievement of health goals. As such, safeguarding the trustworthiness, accuracy and accessibility of digital health information must be a foundational element of any public health strategy. Equally, creating safe digital environments and promoting balanced use of digital technologies is critical for protecting children, youth and other vulnerable groups from digital harms.

During the 2025 World Health Assembly in Berlin, Digital Transformations

for Health Lab, with support from Bertelsmann Stiftung, invited policymakers, public health officials, researchers, digital health experts and civil society partners to explore what further normative guidance, governance approaches and public health action is needed to create healthy digital environments and trustworthy information ecosystems.

This report summarises the main themes arising from two moderated panels and participant interventions, as well as recommendations for priority actions to ensure equitable health outcomes and information integrity.



Summary of discussions

Regulate digital platforms to safeguard health

During the first session, panelists highlighted the need for countries to prioritize health within all digital policies and create healthy online environments, especially for children. Sweden was presented as a successful model, where the public health agency is taking proactive steps to encourage balanced use of digital technologies and educate families about potential digital harms. The discussion underscored the importance of multi-sector collaboration, continuous monitoring of health-related risks associated with AI and other digital transformations, and adapting public health strategies to our increasingly hybrid lives. Participants emphasized the need for stronger regulation of digital platforms and for public health agencies to promote the equivalent of a “digital seatbelt”.

Strengthen health information integrity

Fostering trustworthy and quality online health information was the topic of the second panel. Participants discussed the powerful influence of digital spaces and large language models on health beliefs and behaviours, and the need for platform accountability, digital literacy and intergenerational action to counter misinformation. Panelists shared initiatives that are underway to assess and promote quality health information and the need to establish competent authorities to certify reliable health information sources. The session stressed the importance of digital health literacy at all levels and for experts to better understand how individuals access and assess health information.

Key issues to be taken forward

Information integrity as a public health priority

The manipulation of health information is a longstanding challenge that is now amplified by digital technologies and AI. Trustworthy health information is essential for public health, especially as digital platforms become the dominant source of health knowledge. Misinformation and disinformation are significant public health threats, leading to increased infections, reduced vaccine uptake and negative health outcomes.

Impact of digital platforms on health

Social media and other digital platforms, with their algorithms and persuasive messaging, are profoundly shaping health understanding and behaviours, especially among children and young people. This includes targeted advertising for unhealthy products (such as junk food and tobacco) and the spread of harmful content that can affect users' mental and physical health.

Platform regulation and accountability

The current business models of digital platforms are often incompatible with public health goals. Regulatory action is therefore necessary to protect health and well-being and reduce inequities. Platforms need to be held accountable for addictive design features and the content they host, particularly health messages disseminated by influencers and marketing that targets young audiences.

Certification of quality health information

Connecting people with reliable health-related content with trustworthy providers of online health information is critical to overcome misinformation. AI and algorithmic systems can be

leveraged to amplify quality online health information and increase transparency. Independent, evidence-based certification systems for credible health information are a promising approach that can help platforms and users identify and promote trustworthy sources.

Hybrid approaches

Our lives are increasingly hybrid, blending digital and physical worlds. Therefore, responses to existing and new health challenges must also be hybrid, integrating classic public health strategies with new approaches tailored to the digital environment.

Empowering youth and communities

Young people are both vulnerable to and capable of countering misinformation. Enhancing digital literacy in programmes schools and enabling active youth participation in platform design and governance are crucial steps for identifying and addressing health misinformation. Building the digital literacy of health workers can also contribute to building resilience against health misinformation at the community level.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Addressing the digital determinants of health requires a whole of society approach, involving governments, public health agencies, the tech industry, educators, parents and youth organizations. To date, public health agencies and health ministries have not played a prominent role in digital and data governance. Collaboration across ministries and agencies is crucial, as is learning from countries that have implemented policies and regulations to address misinformation and other digital harms.

Actions to build healthier digital futures

Overall, participants called for urgent, coordinated action to create online environments that promote health and to ensure health information integrity in the digital age. A clear set of priority actions emerged from the discussion:

1. Hold industry accountable

- Implement and enforce regulations to protect children and the public from harmful digital marketing and misinformation.
- Ensure tech industry compliance with international, regional and national standards including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and EU Digital Services Act.
- Encourage industry to publish research and findings in order to increase transparency and support more evidence-based policy responses.

2. Certify the quality of health information

- Establish an international certification system for credible health information to help platforms and users identify trustworthy sources.

3. Enhance digital health literacy and skills

- Integrate health and digital literacy into school curricula and health worker training.
- Train policymakers to enhance their knowledge of AI and other innovations, as well as potential health implications.
- Equip health practitioners to address misinformation brought by patients.

4. Foster cross-sector responses

- Encourage cooperation between ministries (e.g. health, education, digital), public health agencies, tech companies and youth organizations to address issues related to digital platforms.
- Develop cross-agency guidance for parents and youth on healthy and balanced technology use.
- Co-create strategies with youth and other stakeholders.

5. Leverage technology responsibly

- Use AI and algorithmic tools for social listening and educational tools to combat health misinformation.
- Rebalance relevance algorithms so content is driven by quality and not just popularity.
- Design digital platforms with users' safety, health and well-being in mind, especially that of including children and other vulnerable groups.

6. Monitor and evaluate impact

- Conduct regular surveys and research to monitor digital health trends, screen time and exposure to harmful content.
- Develop and use indicators to assess the quality of health information.
- Evaluate the impact of policy responses (such as smartphone restrictions, increased age limits on social media and digital literacy initiatives)

7. Act quickly but thoughtfully

- Balance the need for rapid, precautionary action with the importance of evidence-based strategies.
- Learn from existing public health strategies and adapt them to the ever-changing digital context.





Event outline and speakers

Opening remarks

- Cathryn Clüver-Ashbrook, Executive Vice President/Senior Advisor, Bertelsmann Stiftung
- Dr Sebastian Schmidt-Kaehler, Co-Director Healthcare program, Bertelsmann Stiftung

In opening remarks, Cathryn Clüver-Ashbrook emphasized Bertelsmann Stiftung's commitment to advancing human well-being through education, sustainable cities and healthcare systems, highlighting the organization's 50th anniversary as a catalyst for action.

She warned that the manipulation of health information is a longstanding issue now amplified by technology, with powerful actors redefining the principles of good health and empathy in care. She called for systemic investment and regulation, especially at sub-national levels, to build trust and govern health information effectively.

Sebastian Schmidt-Kaehler expanded on the foundation's focus on Health Information Integrity and building trust in the digital space. He highlighted the InfoCure project which aims to increase the visibility of quality online health information. He advocated for an international certification system to help platforms identify and amplify trustworthy health information, stressing the need to tackle algorithms that promote popularity over quality.

Keynote

- Dr Hans Kluge, Regional Director, WHO EURO

Hans Kluge's keynote highlighted the profound impact digital platforms have on public health, especially for children and young people. He described how the digital environment has become a major health determinant, with targeted advertising and persuasive messaging shaping behaviours and understanding of health, often through misinformation and disinformation.

Dr Kluge emphasized that health misinformation is a serious public health threat, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, and called for regulation to protect vulnerable groups, particularly

children, from harmful digital marketing. He discussed the need for tools like social listening and educational games to help identify and counter misinformation, and stressed the importance of legislation to safeguard children's data and mental health. While acknowledging the benefits of digital platforms for social connection and access to health information, he urged governments and leaders to take decisive action to minimize risks. As with everything in life, he argued that it is all about finding the right balance.





Panel session 1

Lessons from countries that have taken steps to regulate digital platforms

- Dr. Helena Frielingsdorf, Senior Analyst at the Public Health Agency of Sweden
- Dr Hans Kluge, Regional Director, WHO EURO
- Professor Ilona Kickbusch, Director, DTH-Lab

The first panel explored steps that some countries are taking to regulate digital platforms to protect public health. Ilona Kickbusch highlighted the need for “health in all policies” and noted challenges in cross-sector cooperation, with policy responses often coming from outside public health agencies. Sweden was showcased as a positive example, with Helena Frielingsdorf describing the Swedish Public Health Agency’s child rights approach that

balances access to digital benefits with protection from misinformation and harmful content. She shared how, following a wide consultation process, 800,000 households with young children recently received a leaflet with guidance on healthy screen use. The country is also investigating higher age limits for social media and collaborating across sectors to monitor and address digital risks. Hans Kluge added that the WHO is working on several strategies for public

health innovation and digital governance, aiming to leverage technology to improve health outcomes and reduce inequities. The panel underscored the importance of multi-sector collaboration, ongoing monitoring and adapting public health strategies to the realities of our increasingly hybrid lives.

Interventions from other participants highlighted the hybrid nature of modern life that is reshaping health. The integration of social commerce platforms like WeChat illustrates how digital life is becoming fully embedded in daily routines. Additional challenges requiring responses from policymakers included stealth marketing via influencers, AI-generated fake content and “green/pink washing” where companies create

false impressions of their commitment to social causes. Participants called for safety and well-being to be a central consideration for digital platforms, drawing historical parallels to the publishing industry taking responsibility for printed content. In achieving the common goal of raising children as safe, balanced digital citizens, it was agreed that responsibility cannot fall only to parents and requires multi-actor involvement. The discussion concluded with calls for processes to certify quality health information and for public health agencies to lead in developing the equivalent of a seatbelt for the digital world.

Panel session 2

How should public health ensure health information integrity?

- Dr. Ben Johnson, Chief Editor Nature Health
- Dr. Scott Ratzen, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Health Communication; Co-Chair, Nature Medicine Commission on Quality Health Information for All
- Vismita Gupta-Smith, Health Information Integrity, WHO
- Tanushree Jain, Chairperson of public health, IPSF; WHO Youth council

Ben Johnson opened the second panel session by highlighting the surge in research and interest in digital health and AI. He drew historical parallels to the disruptive impact of the printing press and early vaccine misinformation, emphasizing that technology developers often bypass scientific peer review. Johnson called for more entrepreneurs

to publish their findings and subject them to rigorous scientific scrutiny, and stressed the need for empirical data on the accuracy of large language models providing health information.

Scott Ratzen discussed the definition of quality health information, describing it as information that is scientifically sound, accessible and understandable



for decision-making. He explained the new Nature Commission's work on developing indicators to assess health information quality, noting that Austria is among countries interested in piloting these measures. Ratzen raised questions about who should be considered the competent authority for health information and whether new national or multinational bodies are needed.

Vismita Gupta-Smith described WHO's evolving role in responding to health misinformation and building partnerships. She cited well-documented harms of misinformation, especially regarding vaccine uptake, and shared findings from surveys showing that people trust friends and family more than governments or health agencies. Gupta-Smith emphasized the importance of health literacy at all levels and the need for experts to become "people literate" to better understand how individuals access and assess health information.

Tanushree Jain spoke about the influence of digital spaces on health

beliefs and behaviours, noting that digital platforms are the main gateway to health information but are also rife with disguised marketing and misinformation. She highlighted the role of algorithms in normalizing unhealthy behaviors and the mixed nature of mental health content online. Jain advocated for stronger regulation and accountability for platforms, especially regarding marketing targeting young audiences, and stressed the importance of digital literacy and youth involvement in countering misinformation and promoting evidence-based information.

Closing remarks

- Professor Ilona Kickbusch, Director, DTH-Lab

Concluding the session, Ilona Kickbusch stressed the urgency of ongoing research to better understand the digital determinants of health and also to act quickly, leveraging existing public health strategies and learning from successful examples like Sweden to create healthier online environments.

Recognizing the hybrid nature of modern life, she argued that public health responses must also be hybrid, combining classic forms of regulation with innovative approaches. She reiterated that close collaboration across ministries, agencies and

youth organizations is essential, with co-creation needing to be at the heart of every strategy. Certification processes, similar to those used for medicine safety, can play a key role in improving information integrity.

Kickbusch concluded by urging the development of appropriate institutional responses, advancing global governance and responsibility, and treating misinformation and disinformation as a pandemic that demands the same level of effort as other major public health threats.





Further resources

Some of the resources and projects discussed during the meeting are listed below.

- [DTH-Lab's work on digital determinants of health](#)
- [Bertelsmann Stiftung Trusted Health Ecosystems programme](#)
- [Bertelsmann Stiftung InfoCure project](#)
- [Nature Medicine Quality Health Information for All Commission](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Sweden guidance on screen use and health](#)
- [WHO Europe policy brief on addressing the digital determinants of young people's mental health and well-being](#)

About DTH-Lab

DTH-Lab is a global consortium of partners working to drive implementation of The Lancet and Financial Times Commission on Governing Health Futures 2030's recommendations for value-based digital transformations for health co-created with young people. DTH-Lab operates through a distributive governance model, led by three core partners: Ashoka University (India), DTH-Lab (hosted by the University of Geneva, Switzerland) and PharmAccess (Nigeria).

Leadership Team

Aferdita Bytyqi, DTH-Lab Executive Director and Founding Member.

Ilona Kickbusch, DTH-Lab Director and Founding Member.

Anurag Agrawal, DTH-Lab Founding Member. Dean of Biosciences and Health Research, Ashoka University.

Rohinton Medhora, DTH-Lab Founding Member. Professor of Practice, McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development.

Njide Ndili, DTH-Lab Founding Member. Country Director for PharmAccess Nigeria.



Digital Transformations for Health Lab (DTH-Lab)

Hosted by: The University of Geneva

Campus Biotech, Chemin des Mines 9

1202 Geneva, Switzerland

www.DTHLab.org