

Lecture 7 - 28/11/2024 - Oyéné Kossi

Title : Digital (r)evolution, the way to the sustainable implementation of rehabilitation in Africa?

Abstract:

Digitalisation development in the health domain has advanced rapidly, indicating promise of clear benefits for patients. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the development and implementation of digital solutions, with the number of healthcare interventions delivered via digital devices increasing exponentially, also thanks to the wide availability of mobile technology. Indeed, the number of smartphone subscriptions worldwide today has reached six billion and has been estimated to further grow by several hundred million in the next few years including in developing countries of Africa. Digital health, especially mHealth solutions have many potential benefits that could help the treatment of patients, and the development of rehabilitation in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). mHealth is a low-cost option that does not need healthcare facilities. It promotes patient adherence to treatment in comparison to the conventional clinical model of management. Digitalisation can also serve as a basis for formulating treatment plans and partially compensate for the shortcomings of the traditional model. In addition, digital solutions can help achieve universal rehabilitation service coverage by overcoming geographical barriers, thereby increasing the number of ways patients can benefit from the rehabilitation service, and by providing rehabilitation to individuals in remote areas and communities with insufficient healthcare services. However, despite these positive potential aspects, recent systematic reviews demonstrated that there is currently only a very limited number of studies performed in Africa using mHealth. In this course, we will first reviewed the current evidence supporting the use of digital solutions in rehabilitation to identify the countries where studies have been carried out. Then we will identify the current advantages and limitations of the implementation of such solutions in sub-Saharan Africa countries and propose a 10-points action plan, focusing on the macro (e.g., policymakers), meso (e.g., technology and healthcare institutions) and micro (e.g., patients and relatives) levels to ease the validation, use, and thus participate in the sustainable implementation of rehabilitation in Africa.