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The gender dimension of digital health

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Your contact lens monitors your blood sugar levels; a chip in your upper arm transmits body temperature and movement patterns to your smartphone: Welcome to the digital age!

The current digital revolution is particularly relevant for interactions of healthcare providers with patients and the community as a whole. The growing public acceptance and distribution of mobile communication tools provide the prerequisite for information technology (IT) - assisted healthcare applications (apps).

Recent publications report that the previously found gender inequalities in Internet access and usage either diminished, disappeared, or became very specific and context dependent. For example, findings indicate that gender differences shifted to aspects such as autonomy and types of uses. So far, little is known on gender-specific attitudes toward eHealth and telemedicine and how genders differ in their adoption of health apps. Thus, integrating knowledge of the gender dimension in IT development and implementation processes is essential for successful adoption of health IT tools. From a Public Health perspective, close collaboration among healthcare stakeholders could facilitate the harmonization process on hot health topics such as privacy and security issues.