

## Responsible Digital Health Speaker Series #5: "Pilotitis – a digital health epidemic"

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The digital revolution continues to change the face of health systems the world over. At the 71st World Health Assembly (WHA), the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognised the full potential of the digital health revolution to enhance health service capacities and accelerate progress towards achieving health and wellbeing related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 3. They also recognised that the responsible and appropriate use of digital health solutions remains a great challenge. The potential for positive impacts through the application of digital health tools are clear, and it is often cited that they will be a key vehicle on the road to achieving Universal Health Coverage. However, poorly designed, unsustainable, unsafe and irresponsible digital health products can be a waste of time, energy and physical and financial resources, and more importantly can risk the wellbeing for those whose lives they were supposed to improve. Along this continuum of negative outcomes due to badly designed digital health tools, the perpetuation of stereotypes, the widening of the digital divide and the abuse of personal data are also key concerns.

The Digital Health Initiative aims to:

- Encourage and facilitate the sustainable, safe and responsible development and adoption of digital health products amongst international organisations, NGOs, the private sector and government organisations;
- Build capacity among health care workers, local governments, publics, and other end users;
- Ensure uptake and use of strong digital health tools and guidelines.



Pilot projects are an excellent way to prove that your concept for the next game changing digital health innovation works. However, what happens to those projects that do not work? Or those for which donor appetites dry up? Or even for those where there was never any intention of scaling up in the region where the pilot took place?

Often such pilots take place in resource limited settings where needs are high, and the successive running of short-lived pilots stands to cause more harm than good. So extensive is this epidemic of digital health pilots that the term “pilotitis” has been coined to describe it. Not only is pilotitis ineffective at generating lasting positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of communities, but it also destroys community and local government trust, wastes donor funding, and more often than not leads to tech dumping, when devices used in the pilot are no longer needed.

In this webinar, we learn more about this damaging trend and look at ways to be build more substantive sustainable digital health projects.



At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Define “pilotitis”
2. Describe ways in which pilotitis can hinder health development
3. Identify ways to overcome pilotitis



This Responsible Digital Health Speaker Series will feature experts from healthcare, academia, public and private sector.



Participation is open to government officials, diplomats, staff of international organizations, development practitioners, faculty members, and administrators of educational institutions.

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