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Advancements in Vaccination Tracking and Delivery Systems through Health Informatics: A Review of Digital Innovations and COVID-19 Impact

Amani M. Beshbishy*

National Research Center for Protozoan Diseases, Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Nishi 2-13 Inada-cho, Obihiro, Hokkaido, 080-8555, Japan https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9611-762X

Abstract

Background: Immunization remains a cornerstone of public health, significantly reducing the burden of infectious diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of vaccination but also disrupted routine vaccination programs globally, leading to a resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Methods: This review analyzes the innovations in vaccination tracking and delivery facilitated by health informatics, particularly d uring and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the role of digital health technologies, including electronic health records (EHRs), mobile health applications (mHealth), telemedicine, and artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing vaccination efforts.

Results: The integration of digital tools has shown promise in improving vaccination coverage and logistics. EHRs have enabled efficient tracking of immunization history and patient reminders, while mHealth applications have facilitated real-time communication between healthcare providers and patients. Telemedicine has expanded access to vaccination services, particularly in underserved areas. However, challenges such as digital literacy disparities, data privacy concerns, and the digital divide remain significant barriers.

Conclusion: The successful integration of digital health technologies into vaccination programs presents a transformative opportunity to bolster immunization rates and improve public health outcomes. Addressing the existing challenges through targeted investments in inf rastructure, education, and data security is essential for realizing the full potential of these innovations in a post-pandemic landscape.

Keywords: Vaccination, Health Informatics, Digital Health Technologies, COVID-19, Public Health.

1. Introduction

Immunization has long been acknowledged as a key and successful public health measure, serving as the foundation of the primary healthcare system [1,2]. Progress in vaccine development has markedly reduced the impact of infectious illnesses, averting millions of fatalities annually [1,3,4]. Pivotal research by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that worldwide vaccination initiatives over the last 50 years had safeguarded about 154 million individuals, averaging six lives saved each minute. Vaccination for 14 illnesses, such as diphtheria, measles, pertussis, and polio, has decreased infant mortality by 40% worldwide and over 50% in Africa [5,6]. The measles vaccination significantly influenced public health, responsible for 60% of lives preserved, and is anticipated to continue as a major factor in decreasing mortality [6,7]. The eradication of smallpox, the near elimination of polio, and recent achievements in combating illnesses such as malaria and cervical cancer underscore the transformational efficacy

*Corresponding author e-mail: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9611-762X .; (**Amani M. Beshbishy**).

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of vaccination [8-10]. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unparalleled challenges to global health, highlighting the critical need of vaccination in protecting public health and safety. As of now, 5.47 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccinations have been delivered globally, with more than 56% of the population having received a full primary series [11-13].

According to the most recent data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), a cumulative total of 981 million COVID-19 vaccine doses (comprising first, second, and booster doses) have been delivered in EU/EEA nations [14,15]. In 2021, over 30 million doses were administered, declining to around 199,000 doses by May 2023 [16]. Nonetheless, the efforts undertaken to ensure extensive COVID-19 vaccination coverage burdened healthcare systems in 2020 and 2021. This led to significant disruptions in regular vaccination programs, resulting in decreased community vaccine coverage and a markedly heightened risk of illness [17]. The worldwide resurgence of measles outbreaks, the disruption of the polio eradication initiative, and the rising incidence of illnesses including diphtheria and pertussis have been chiefly ascribed to the decrease in vaccination coverage resulting from the interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic [18-20]. The WHO/UNICEF immunization data site indicates that vaccine coverage for diphtheria, tetanus toxoid, as well as pertussis (DTP), along with poliomyelitis, declined from 86% in 2019 to 82% during the pandemic years of 2020–2021 [21-23]. The Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030), endorsed by all member states in 2020, pledges to reduce the number of zero-dose children globally by fifty percent, guarantee that children who have missed vaccinations be immunized, and reinstate vaccination services to pre-pandemic standards [24].

In the post-COVID-19 era, health technology solutions, including electronic medical records (EHRs), mobile health apps (mHealth), telemedicine, and other Internet-connected smart devices, may emerge as pivotal options for improving immunization strategies and recalibrating global vaccination coverage [25]. These gadgets facilitate the collection of an individual's healthcare information at home, enhancing vaccine delivery logistics, monitoring adverse events more efficiently, and assuring thorough vaccination coverage, especially in underprivileged areas [25]. This review paper analyzes the achievements and shortcomings of digital health initiatives in vaccination efforts during and after the COVID-19 epidemic. It is a summary of prospective integration solutions designed to establish adaptive and robust vaccination systems. The study aims to assist policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and technologists in using digital health technologies to enhance vaccination initiatives and improve readiness for future public health crises.

1. Digital Health Instruments in Vaccination

The digital revolution has profoundly altered the creation of goods and services in several sectors, particularly human health [26,27]. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a realistic testing ground for the implementation of novel digital health technologies, underscoring their prospective application in the post-pandemic environment [28]. Their systematic implementation may be crucial for reinstating and improving worldwide vaccination rates in the post-pandemic period, guaranteeing that no demographic is excluded from the initiative to avert vaccine-preventable illnesses [29]. A diverse array of digital technologies enhancing accessibility, efficiency, and efficacy in healthcare systems for vaccination programs was deployed.

The EHRs serve as a repository of real-world data, providing a centralized platform for the complete and longitudinal storage and management of patient information, including vaccination histories and the identification of patients due for immunization [30]. Recent advancements in EHR technology, including interoperability standards and connectivity with public health records, have facilitated seamless data exchange across healthcare systems, enhancing collaboration in monitoring vaccination coverage and dispersion [31,32]. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) provide computerized reminder programs and clinical decision-making tools, which may motivate healthcare practitioners to promptly deliver vaccinations and notify patients about forthcoming or missed immunizations [33]. The implementation of EHRs presents many problems. Factors like as data privacy issues, substantial implementation costs, and the need for extensive training for

healthcare personnel might impede their wider use [34]. The proliferation of Electronic Health Records (EHRs) has resulted in a substantial amount of data being more accessible to both authorized and unauthorized individuals, potentially compromising the confidentiality and privacy of patients' personal information [35,36]. The heterogeneity in EHR system capabilities and the absence of uniform standards might lead to variations in data quality and accessibility [37]. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the strategic use of EHRs in immunization initiatives may enhance public health outcomes by guaranteeing extensive vaccination coverage and enabling swift responses to emerging disease risks.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, worldwide consumers augmented their engagement with mobile applications across diverse sectors, including healthcare applications [38]. mHealth has emerged as an effective instrument for communicating with physicians and sustaining regular vaccination regimens, even in remote regions [39-41]. These programs provide several unique features, such as immediate access to vaccination data, customized immunization regimens, and automatic notifications for forthcoming or overdue vaccinations [39,41,42]. The advancements in mHealth technology, including integration with EHRs, have significantly enhanced their potential use in healthcare environments [43]. Another beneficial use of mHealth applications pertains to enhancing vaccination rates and knowledge among various groups [39,41,44]. The efficacy of vaccination programs relies on both the equal distribution of safe vaccinations and their acceptance and use by the populace. In this context, applications function as platforms for healthcare practitioners to provide real-time information during vaccination campaigns, including vaccine availability and local clinic hours, to guarantee extensive vaccine coverage [29].

Privacy issues, the digital divide impacting technological availability, and the requirement for stringent evaluation of application performance might present substantial obstacles to their usage [45]. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, mHealth apps provide significant potential to enhance vaccination rates by offering accessible, intuitive platforms for vaccine administration and teaching, therefore bolstering public health activities and fortifying resilience against subsequent pandemics. Throughout the COVID-19 epidemic, virtual communication technologies enabled remote discussions among healthcare providers and patients. They also facilitated the development of leadership monitors to enhance processes, improve resource distribution, and concentrate on patient immunization methods [46]. The shift to telehealth and telemedicine technologies was notably enhanced and expedited throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These qualities impacted not just COVID-19 patients but also all persons engaging with medical care [47]. This alteration resulted in a notable reduction in face-to-face patient appointments, with a considerable increase in telehealth visits [48].

Despite a current decline in the adoption of telemedicine and telehealth services, its implementation in the post-pandemic period seems to transcend geographical limitations and enhance global access to vaccination treatments [49,50]. These systems may facilitate healthcare practitioners in conducting virtual consultations, evaluating immunization requirements, and remotely monitoring adverse responses. In areas with restricted healthcare access and in-person consultations, telemedicine may provide prompt treatments and follow-up services, assuring people get vital vaccinations without necessitating actual trips to clinics [51]. The extensive use of telehealth and telemedicine is hindered by problems including as data privacy issues, the digital divide impacting access in underprivileged regions, and the need for significant investment in technology and training [52].

Throughout the epidemic, surveillance platforms, like the COVID-19 Open Research Database, have enabled rapid data dissemination among researchers and the examination of extensive genetic information about the worldwide spread of SARS-CoV-2 variants [53]. Data analytics and monitoring systems have a significant opportunity to enhance both national and worldwide health safety, particularly in the optimization of global vaccination efforts. These systems use big data to monitor vaccine coverage rates, identify high-risk groups, including patients with chronic or persistent infections, and forecast disease

outbreaks resulting from inadequate immunization coverage [54,55]. Additionally, monitoring systems enable the prompt identification of vaccine-preventable illnesses and adverse events after vaccination (AEFIs), allowing for rapid reactions and containment strategies [56-58]. Nonetheless, guaranteeing data integrity, safeguarding privacy, and assuring compatibility across healthcare systems continue to pose persistent issues that need joint endeavors among stakeholders to enhance global vaccination initiatives and attain health parity [59,60].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) served as crucial instruments for the fast study of vaccination coverage by examining extensive datasets to enhance vaccine distribution, forecast disease outbreaks, and tailor healthcare measures [61]. Specifically, AI technologies produced data summaries from diverse sources, enabling real-time surveillance of vaccination advancements in high-risk groups [61,62]. Moreover, machine learning algorithms have improved vaccination effectiveness studies by detecting trends in vaccine reactions and adverse events, therefore impacting regulatory choices and vaccine development initiatives [63]. AI-driven analytics may personalize vaccination outreach by customizing communication techniques for certain demographic groups, thereby more effectively tackling vaccine reluctance [64]. Addressing AI ethics, confidentiality of data, as well as algorithm transparency is essential when using these technologies in vaccination programs [65]. Cooperative initiatives among academics, politicians, and healthcare professionals are crucial to fully use AI's capabilities in improving global vaccination rates and public health results.

The healthcare sector is being transformed by the Internet of Things (IoT) revolution, marked by technical innovations, enhanced economic efficiency, and considerable social advantages [66,67]. In recent years, IoT devices have been essential for tracking vaccine packaging conditions, maintaining vaccine efficacy, and streamlining supply chain logistics [68]. IoT sensors monitor temperature, humidity, and different environmental variables in storage facilities, delivering real-time warnings and messages to healthcare practitioners when circumstances fall outside ideal parameters [69]. Moreover, IoT-enabled inventory control systems optimize vaccine distribution by automated stock replenishment, reduction of stockouts, and enhancement of supply chain efficiency [70]. As healthcare systems increasingly use IoT technologies, it is crucial to ensure privacy of data, interoperability, and scalability to enhance their effectiveness in global vaccination initiatives and improve healthcare delivery globally [71].

2. Obstacles and Suggestions

The digital gap is a substantial barrier to the integration of digital health technologies with vaccination initiatives, especially in the post-COVID-19 period [72]. This disparity is evident in several forms, particularly in the availability of digital and technological literacy. In several locations, particularly low- and middle-income nations and rural locales, access to fundamental technology, including cell phones, laptops, and dependable internet connections, is restricted [73,74]. This deficiency in access obstructs the capacity of people and healthcare professionals to efficiently use digital health solutions. Moreover, despite the availability of technology, differing degrees of digital literacy may hinder its efficient use [75]. Numerous people, especially older persons and those in marginalized areas may lack the competencies required to use digital platforms, applications, or online health information, resulting in a decreased involvement with digital health resources [76]. Economic obstacles exacerbate the problem. The expense of technology may be burdensome for several people and healthcare institutions, especially in poor nations. The elevated expenses related to gadgets, internet access, and software subscriptions hinder the extensive use of digital health instruments. Geographic differences significantly influence outcomes. Urban regions often possess superior infrastructure and resources relative to rural ones, leading to significant disparities in the accessibility and quality of digital health services, hence intensifying health inequalities [77].

Targeted actions are necessary to address these facets of the digital divide. Enhancing and investing in digital infrastructure, especially in underprivileged areas, is essential. Improving digital literacy via educational initiatives is an essential tactic. These initiatives should

focus on both healthcare practitioners and the general populace, including training on the appropriate use of digital health resources [78]. Community centers, such as senior or geriatric facilities, libraries, and educational institutions, may function as settings for digital literacy instruction. Furthermore, creating digital health solutions customized to local settings and languages might enhance usability and uptake. Engaging the local population in the design and execution process guarantees that the solutions address their particular needs and contexts. Strategic expenditures and educational programs aimed at bridging the digital gap may enable digital health solutions to reach and benefit a wider audience. This strategy is crucial for enhancing vaccination rates and oversight, resulting in improved public health results and greater preparedness to future health threats in the post-pandemic period. Resistance to change amongst medical professionals and the public is a substantial obstacle to the coordination of digital health technologies with vaccination initiatives. This opposition often arises from a lack of knowledge with new technology and doubt over their effectiveness and dependability [79].

Healthcare personnel, used with traditional procedures and processes, may exhibit reluctance to embrace digital technologies that need the acquisition of new systems and modification of existing practices. Apprehensions about the dependability of digital solutions, possible interruptions to patient care, and the time commitment required to acclimate to new technology may contribute to this hesitance [80]. Furthermore, the public may demonstrate resistance stemming from a deficiency in comprehension or confidence in digital health services. Misconceptions and apprehensions about security and confidentiality of data may engender doubt about the advantages and security of digital health management systems. This is particularly applicable to individuals with little digital literacy or prior adverse experiences with technologies [81]. To tackle these problems, it is essential to adopt techniques that foster acceptance and trust in digital health solutions. Involving medical professionals throughout the development and adoption process may customize solutions to their requirements and processes, facilitating a smoother transition. Offering extensive training and ongoing assistance may mitigate apprehensions and enhance proficiency in using new technology [81].

Public educational programs that emphasize the advantages and security of electronic health records may foster confidence. Clarity regarding the collection, use, and safeguarding of data is essential for mitigating privacy apprehensions. Moreover, engaging community leaders and reputable healthcare practitioners in advocating for digital health technologies might augment credibility and adoption [82]. Developing pilot projects and success narratives may effectively illustrate the efficacy of digital health remedies, offering concrete proof of their advantages. Disseminating these favorable results might mitigate skepticism and promote broader acceptance. Targeted participation, education, and support may mitigate resistance to change, therefore expediting the incorporation of digital health solutions, resulting in enhanced vaccine coverage and more efficient health monitoring. Enhancing data security standards is essential for the successful combination of digital health technologies with vaccination initiatives. Given that digital health solutions manage sensitive health details, safeguarding the confidentiality and safety of this data is essential. Comprehensive data protection procedures are essential to mitigate privacy concerns and foster public confidence. By concentrating on these tactics to enhance information security structures, it is feasible to successfully mitigate privacy issues and cultivate the requisite public confidence in medical technology. This trust is essential for the effective adoption and incorporation of these innovations, which may markedly improve vaccination coverage and monitoring.

3. Conclusions

In summary, the integration of digital health technologies with vaccination efforts has significant promise for enhancing vaccination rates and monitoring, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context. Nonetheless, they also provide significant drawbacks that may result in progress toward inaccurate or poor outcomes. Digital systems may be complicated and may need training for users. If healthcare practitioners or administrators lack sufficient training, they may abuse or misunderstand the technology, resulting in mistakes in vaccination administration or monitoring. Furthermore, they must be included into the current healthcare infrastructure to ensure efficacy. Inadequate integration may result in disjointed data and inefficiencies, compromising the comprehensive vaccination plan. To alleviate these risks, it is essential to approach the implementation of electronic health records with meticulous planning, stakeholder involvement, and continuous assessment. This analysis has highlighted numerous critical elements and obstacles of this integration, stressing the need of tackling the digital divide, mitigating opposition to change, and guaranteeing stringent data security. Guaranteeing fair access to digital health technologies necessitates significant expenditures in digital infrastructure, especially in underprivileged and rural regions. Enhancing internet connection and offering cheap technologies may bridge the access divide and enable more groups to profit from digital health breakthroughs. Programs designed to improve digital literacy for healthcare professionals and the general populace are essential.

These initiatives may enhance acceptability and facilitate the efficient utilization of digital tools, hence streamlining the transfer to new technology. Addressing opposition to change amongst healthcare providers and consumers is a crucial factor. Involving stakeholders early in the planning and execution phases, offering extensive training, and showcasing the advantages of electronic health records via pilot initiatives and success narratives help foster trust and acceptance. Effective communication of the benefits of digital technologies and their enhancement of patient care and vaccination initiatives is crucial in this context. Enhancing data security regulations is essential for fostering public confidence in health technology. Establishing stringent data security protocols, adhering to global standards, and guaranteeing openness in data use are essential actions.

By protecting sensitive health information and mitigating privacy concerns, we can cultivate a secure atmosphere in which digital health products are accepted and broadly embraced. The amalgamation of digital health technologies with vaccination efforts presents a transformational potential to improve vaccine coverage and oversight. By tackling the principal problems and executing targeted initiatives, digital health solutions may markedly enhance public health outcomes. In the post-COVID-19 age, using digital advances may enhance the efficiency and efficacy of vaccination programs, hence promoting improved health for everyone.

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