



Health Literacy-Part II

Concept, Ethical implication and Security Consideration

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to:

- explain the concept of Digital Health in Sri Lanka
- explain the ethical implications of digital health interventions
- explain the security and privacy consideration

Concept of Digital Health in Sri Lanka

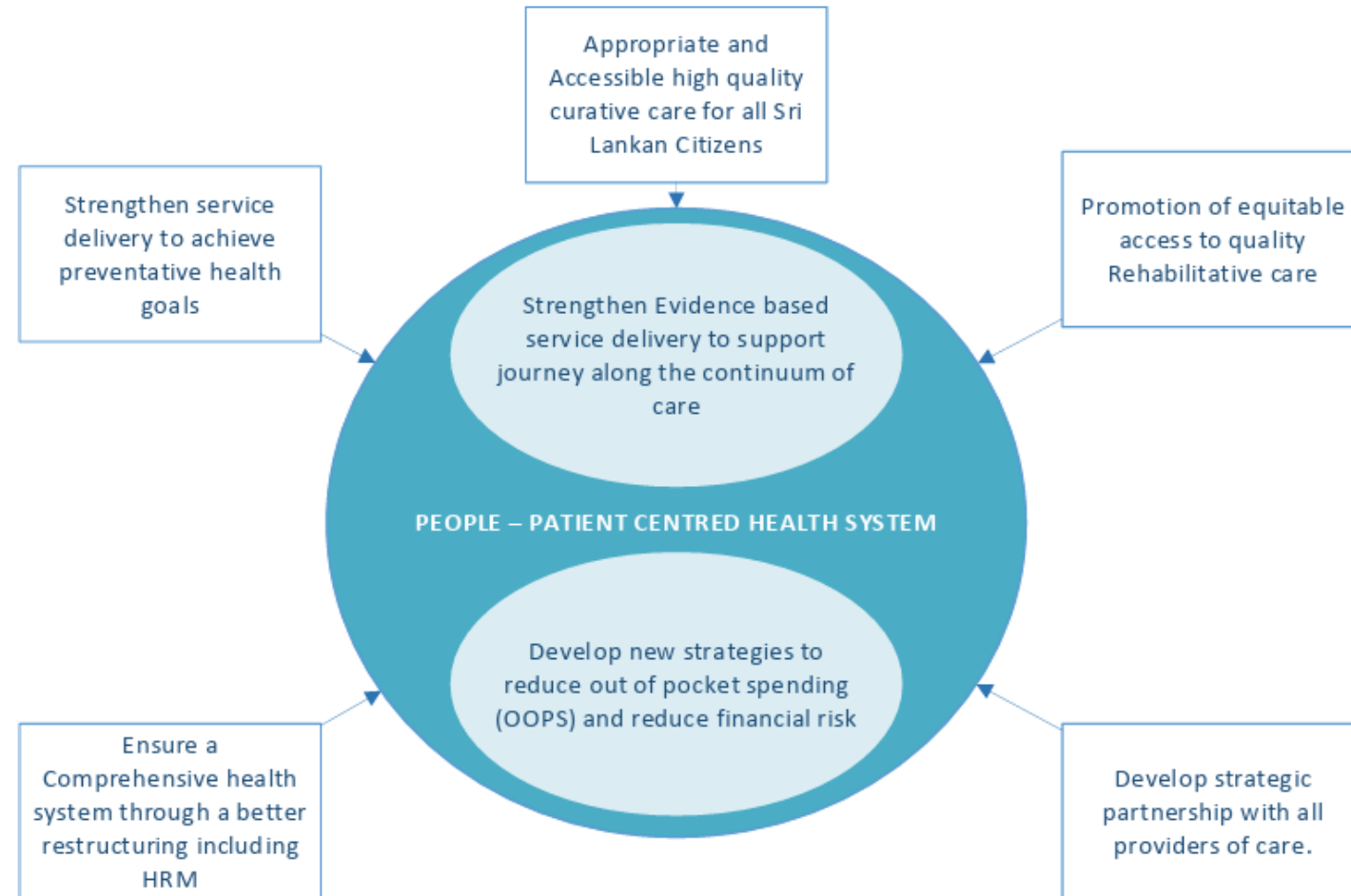


Figure 1 : Main Strategic Areas of National Health Policy⁶

Benefits of the National Digital Health Policies of Sri Lanka

- Patients seeking care at healthcare institutions
- Providers during healthcare delivery processes and using clinical decision support
- Public health officials utilizing disease monitoring data
- Citizens utilizing health services
- Health Administrators utilizing data to make evidence-based decisions and policies
- Digital health vendors investing in new digital health platforms
- Health related software developers to recognize digital health architecture

Health literacy in Sri Lanka is a mixed picture,

- Studies showing adequate levels in specific areas like understanding and accessing health information,
- Others highlight limitations in domains like reading, appraisal, and decision-making.
- Generally, health literacy in Sri Lanka is considered to be between somewhat inadequate and sufficient.

Ethical implications of digital health interventions

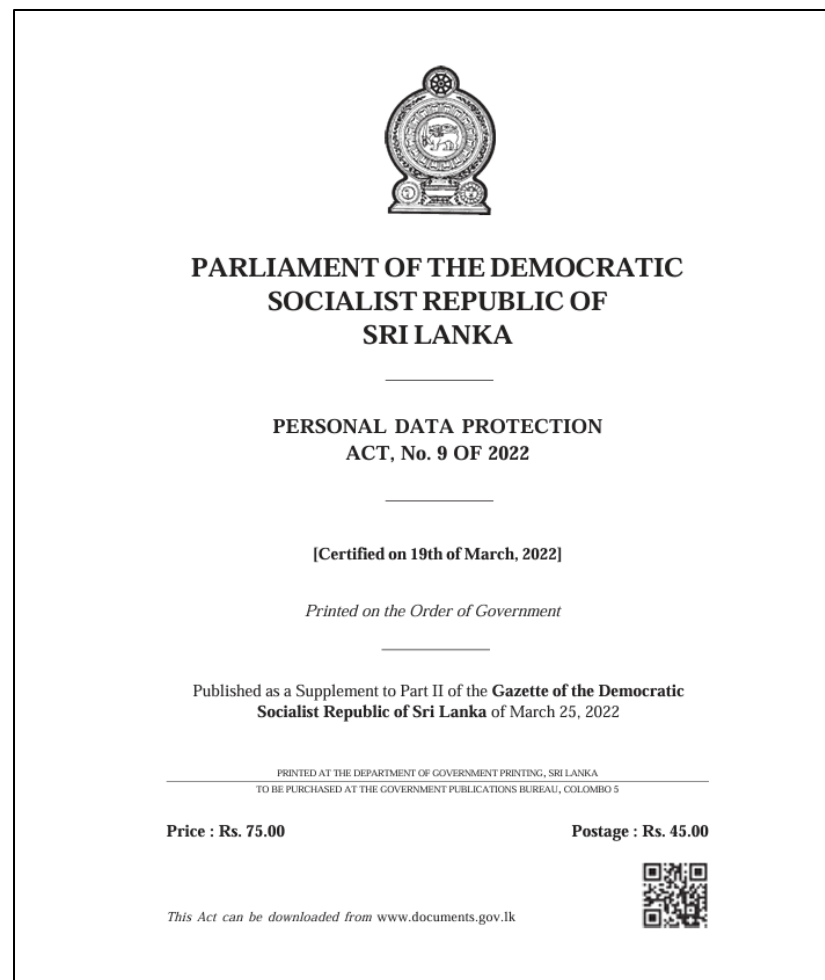
Digital health interventions in Sri Lanka raise ethical considerations related to

- data privacy,
- patient confidentiality,
- equitable access, and
- informed consent.

- **Beneficence and well-being** – Digital health technologies should ‘do no harm’, and include an obligation to be aware of, and mitigate, harms that may occur.
- **Autonomy, informed consent, and privacy** – All individuals should be recognized as having agency over themselves and their personal information. This protection not only applies to the data collected from specific technologies, but also to data exchange mechanisms between various technologies.
- **Participation and inclusion** – Technologies should be co-designed with people whose personal information and rights will be impacted by them (participatory design).

- **Transparency** – Digital health technologies should be developed, adopted and implemented in an open and accessible manner that allows for public feedback, consultation and monitoring.
- **Non-discrimination and equity** – Digital health technologies should not deliberately or unintentionally discriminate against individuals.

Security and privacy consideration



Personal Data Protection Act, Sri Lanka

- Protecting the privacy of personal information is a legal requirement under The Personal Data Protection Act
- On March 18th, 2022, Sri Lanka enacted the Personal Data Protection Act, No. 9 of 2022 (the “Act” or “PDPA”), a comprehensive data protection legislation modelled after the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in the European Union (EU) and gradually comes into effect in the beginning of 2023.

Ensure that processing of personal information utilizes the following principles:

- **Legitimacy:** Processing of personal information must be for a “specified, explicit and legitimate” purpose.
- **Proportionality:** Processing of personal information must be “adequate, relevant and proportionate” to the extent necessary in relation to the purpose of processing.
- **Accuracy:** Processing of personal information must be “accurate and kept up to date”.
- **Limited Retention:** Personal information should be kept only as far and as long as necessary for purpose to which it was processed.

- **Integrity:** Controllers must ensure integrity and confidentiality of personal information processed by using appropriate technical and organizational measures including encryption, pseudonymization, anonymization, access controls or other such measures.
- **Transparency:** Controllers have an obligation to process in a transparent manner enabling data subjects to receive information they request regarding the processing of their information.
- **Accountability:** Controllers must implement internal controls and procedures, a “Data Protection Management Program”, to maintain adequate data processing records and ensure appropriate oversight.

Key Ethical Considerations:

- **Informed Consent:** Patients should be provided with clear, concise, and culturally appropriate information to make informed decisions about their health.
- **Respect for Autonomy:** Individuals have the right to make decisions about their own health, and health professionals must respect their choices.
- **Beneficence:** Actions should be taken to promote the patient's best interests and well-being.

- **Non-Maleficence:** Efforts should be made to avoid causing harm to patients.
- **Social Justice:** Health literacy efforts should be designed to address health inequities and ensure that everyone has access to the information they need to make informed decisions about their health.
- **Cultural Competence:** Health information and communication should be adapted to the cultural backgrounds and preferences of patients.

- **Collaboration and International Harmonization:** Ethical principles should be promoted and shared globally to ensure consistent and equitable access to health information, according to Oxford Academic.
- **Communication:** Health professionals must communicate with patients in a clear, respectful, and compassionate manner.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Patient information should be kept confidential and protected from unauthorized access.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Potential conflicts of interest, such as financial incentives for recommending certain products or treatments, should be disclosed and addressed.

Under PDPA, data subjects have the following rights and choices:

- **Right of access:** Data subjects have the right to request access of their personal information.
- **Right to withdrawing consent:** Data subjects have the right to withdraw consent and to object to the processing of their personal information.
- **Right to rectification:** Data subjects have the right to request that their personal information be corrected or rectified when inaccurate.
- **Right to erasure:** Data subject may request to have their personal information erased.

Literature

- Sri Lanka Digital Health Blueprint Enabling a Healthier Nation through Digital Transformation of Healthcare. (2023). <https://www.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Digital-Health-Blue-Print-Full-Book-01.11.2023-Final.pdf>
- Information security guideline. (2023) https://www.health.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Information-security-gudeline_1.0-2.3.23.pdf
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Thank You