



RCP digital health strategy 2022–24

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools across healthcare, and it is clear that these tools will play an increasingly significant role in the future of healthcare delivery. Digital innovation is helping to transform efficiency and response times but requires patients and clinicians to adapt to new approaches and different ways of working. To grasp the opportunities it provides to improve healthcare and support physicians in a sustainable way, we have developed this digital health strategy¹ to guide the RCP's work in this area over the next 3 years and potentially beyond.

As the leading body for physicians in the UK and internationally, the RCP envisages a world in which everyone has the best possible health and healthcare. To achieve this vision, our digital health strategy recognises the extraordinary demands on the NHS and other healthcare systems, on the clinicians that work within these systems and the needs and experiences of patients and carers

Our digital health strategy aligns closely with the RCP's new overarching [strategy for 2022–24](#). To support its development we engaged with RCP staff and officers, the medical specialties and our Patient and Carer Network. We will continue to consult and collaborate with these groups and with our key digital stakeholders to inform and support us in its delivery.

Our key strategic partnerships for digital health

NHS Transformation Directorate²

Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs)

Health Education England (HEE)

Faculty of Clinical Informatics

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC)

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Our strategic objectives

The three priorities outlined in the RCP's new strategy for 2022–24 are:

- > **educating** physicians and supporting them to fulfil their potential
- > **improving** health and care and leading the prevention of ill health across communities
- > **influencing** the way that healthcare is designed and delivered.

These priorities underpin the RCP digital health strategy, which emphasises a collaborative cross-college approach to ensure value for money. A robust digital infrastructure will also enable the RCP's

¹ Note that there is a separate RCP digital engagement strategy (published in 2020) that focuses on the RCP website, social media, RCP Player and the other digital tools we use to communicate and engage with our members and fellows and stakeholders

² NHSX is now part of the NHSE Transformation Directorate

new strategy to reach beyond traditional audiences with a focus on increased member and stakeholder engagement.

This digital health strategy outlines for each priority how the RCP can focus its efforts to maximise impact. Many current activities can be delivered within existing budgets / programme activity, supported by the clinical lead for digital health and colleagues within the Digital Engagement Group. Other areas that emerge as important may require additional resource to provide leadership and support delivery over the lifetime of the strategy. The RCP has made progress on digital access and relevance. A commitment to this digital health strategy will enable this progress to be continued and accelerated over the next 3 years.

Our digital health priorities

Educating physicians and supporting them to fulfil their potential

We will strive for excellence in the training and continuing professional development of physicians and physician associates throughout their careers.

We will:

- > support members to have the skills required to benefit from new digital tools, so they can play a full part in the new digital landscape, ensuring that none become digitally excluded
- > provide opportunities by signposting and networking for members who are interested in developing careers with an interest in digital health, and ensuring these careers are open to a diverse and inclusive member cohort.

We will do this by:

- > undertaking a needs assessment and developing or signposting to innovative learning opportunities across a variety of platforms with an emphasis on supporting members who may be at risk of digital exclusion or who are developing a career in digital health
- > leveraging the knowledge and expertise of the RCP membership, including the voice of trainees, to inform our work
- > developing knowledge through membership engagement using an omni-channel approach, for example with regular articles in *Commentary* / themed issues / study days / conference sessions and focused blogs
- > being at the forefront of developing and supporting the implementation of curricula and training pathways and exploring the potential of developing a credential in digital health in partnership with others.

Improving health and care and leading the prevention of ill health across communities

We will improve the quality, outcomes, safety and experience of patient care by developing and setting standards. We will support the clinical community to embed those standards by enabling and sharing local, regional, national and international quality and service improvement initiatives.

We will:

- > improve the dissemination and implementation of digital innovation, connecting our members to leverage their skills and experiences for the benefit of the wider healthcare system and each other

- > use the Medical Care – driving change (MCDC) improvement portal to host carefully curated content on digital health tools and to signpost members to relevant digital health resources and initiatives through our strategic partnerships
- > use our established skills in quality improvement to successfully drive change in digital health.

We will do this by:

- > supporting the MCDC content board and editor-in-chief to work with expert content advisers to create and curate relevant content
- > creating partnerships with key stakeholders to host their content and signpost links
- > facilitating member networking to enable support, mentorship and professional development in digital health
- > working collaboratively with medical specialty colleagues in digital health and transformation
- > encouraging the development of best practice and protocols relevant to digital health in partnerships with others
- > contributing to developments in digital healthcare to enhance how health is monitored and how healthcare is delivered while managing risk and maximising patient safety.

Influencing the way that healthcare is designed and delivered

On behalf of members, we will provide leadership in shaping government, health and care policy and practice related to digital health. We will represent our members to ensure that their voice is heard when shaping the digital health landscape. Working with and through others we will focus on reducing patient and clinician digital exclusion and improving digital literacy of staff.

The RCP already engages with decision makers in this area. The clinical lead for digital health represents the RCP on relevant national and international committees. A consistent, cross-college approach is vital to ensure RCP representation and engagement with our key strategic partners. Many of these aims are shared by other colleges and we will work in concert with them either through bilateral relationships or through the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC).

We will:

- > maintain an awareness and understanding of the developments in digital health policy and practice
- > engage with our members, gathering intelligence to enable us to develop RCP policy and influence strategies in digital health
- > use strategic communications, engagement and heritage to place the physician workforce and patients at the forefront of public debate about digital health.

We will do this by:

- > providing thought leadership in relevant policy arenas based on member engagement and feedback
- > driving and contributing to the AoMRC digital health group.

Following best practice in our governance, internal operations and stakeholder engagement

Digital tools are fundamental to all aspects of the operations of the RCP. Our digital engagement strategy published in 2020 examined what was needed to modernise the digital infrastructure of the RCP. Delivery of that strategy is ongoing with one of its key components a new RCP main website. To increase efficiency and deliver the joined-up approach that our members have the right to expect, we need to focus on more than our infrastructure. We need to work collaboratively across the RCP to

procure and use digital tools in a consistent manner in order to unlock synergies, reduce silo working and fragmentation.

In digital health we will:

- > encourage and drive cross-college synergies in the use of digital tools so that they are deployed in a consistent and thoughtful way
- > support the delivery of the new RCP website to better engage our stakeholders in our work
- > promote a consistent approach to the current different websites so they appear as an integrated whole.

We will do this by:

- > driving and shaping the focus of the RCP Digital Engagement Group
- > supporting collaborative commissioning of appropriate digital platforms.

Measuring our success

We will know we are succeeding when:

- > we have increased the number and engagement of members in our digital health work
- > we have supported members to feel more digitally empowered and knowledgeable
- > partners and external stakeholders value us as a leader in the digital health arena, with productive strategic partnership with key organisations.

Delivery and governance

The Care Quality Improvement Directorate (CQID) hosts the clinical lead for digital health post. No other resources are identified or funded to support this priority activity. Where possible, administration and leadership support are provided from within the directorate. The clinical lead engages broadly across the RCP and with our key strategic partnerships in delivering the strategy.

Activity reporting and risk management is conducted via the CQID Board with onward reporting and escalation as required to the RCP Board of Trustees and the RCP Audit and Risk Committee.

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