

Beyond COVID-19: To rebuild, we need to personalise healthcare

The new Personalised Health Index for Asia-Pacific will help countries to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic

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The time to plan for life after COVID-19 is now. Yes, the pandemic is far from over. However, with the lessons from the coronavirus response in mind and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in sight, we must get ready now to rebuild the world's healthcare systems.

As we do that, **we should focus on one key goal: providing universal access to basic healthcare services.** One of the most important tools to achieve that will be personalised healthcare.

'Personalised Health' is a term that is often misunderstood. Many associate it with healthcare for the rich, with doctors analysing a patient's genome to identify risk factors or tailor treatments. However, personalised healthcare can – and should – start at a much more fundamental level.



Offering personalised health is simply an approach for healthcare delivery that gives people access to services in a way that is more targeted, more efficient, more responsive, more equitable and more accountable than it is currently.

This is now possible, thanks to the near-ubiquitous access to smart mobile devices and greater connectivity in even the least developed parts of the world. Thanks to the consumerisation of digital technologies, these tools have become accessible and affordable for most, which in turn makes it possible to offer personalised healthcare at scale.

Personalising healthcare can start, for example, with using digital platforms to help people make medical appointments online, so that they don't have to queue for hours at a hospital anymore before they see a doctor. Digital tools can make it possible to prescribe medications easily and at a reasonable cost. And yes, personalised healthcare will extend to telemedicine solutions and can go all the way to informing personal genome sequencing. On the other side of the coin, it will enable healthcare service providers provide more effective service thus improving the efficiency of the health system overall.

This pandemic has shown us how important it is to personalise healthcare, because clinicians have to understand the interplay between the many manifestations of the coronavirus infection and any underlying conditions of the patient.

However, personalising health helps not just the individual, but also the system. As well as the scale of big data analytics, simple digital tools also allow us to better understand diseases, for example by helping frontline caregivers to gather basic health information easily and in a standardised way. That's another key lesson learned from this pandemic, because in some countries every region was defining and reporting COVID-19 data differently, which resulted in a confusing picture



Interoperability of health-related data will be key, not just at a national but also a regional level and beyond.



Personalising health is not a luxury, but a fundamentally sound approach to providing healthcare.

and poor coordination, and made it a challenge to quickly direct resources where they were needed most.

Even at its most basic, it brings huge efficiencies and better patient outcomes to any health service.

That's why this first-of-its-kind Personalised Health Index for Asia-Pacific is so important. Looking at 27 indicators – underpinned by credible and open-source real-world data, health authorities, and a panel of experts – the Index measures the personalised health readiness of 11 health systems across the region. Let me be absolutely clear: this Index is neither a competition nor a league table. Instead, it is a tool that will help decision makers to identify their healthcare system's unique strengths and weaknesses, see how it compares to other neighbours, and highlights what they can learn from others and which insights they should focus on from within. Importantly, it will be a helpful tool to promote collaboration and cooperation between countries in the region for collective action to solve important health challenges.



Policy makers that use the Index are gaining a powerful matrix to make their national health system perform better, because they will see exactly where to prioritise their efforts and resources.

With the help of this tool, we can build healthcare systems that use data, analytics, and technology to provide the right care tailored to the right person at the right time – ultimately leading to better health outcomes for all citizens.

Now we have to rebuild – better. And I truly believe the Personalised Health Index for Asia-Pacific can be our platform to achieving that. At the end of the day, it is the people and the nation that will ultimately benefit from the Index as succinctly expressed by Diosdado Macapagal, the ninth president of the Philippines, 'the strength of the nation lies in the well-being of the common man'.

The Index findings have been published in a whitepaper "Getting to Personalised Healthcare in APAC" coordinated by the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies and informed by expert insights from across Asia-Pacific.

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The Personalised Health Index and whitepaper are now available on FutureProofingHealthcare.com

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