



Digital health services in Qatar

Digital health services in Qatar were rapidly implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly to ensure the provision of essential care for people living with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and other health needs, all within the safety of their homes. Previously, primary health care centers and general hospitals offered in-person care for NCDs and related risk factors. However, to minimize unnecessary exposure to COVID-19 for people at higher risk of severe symptoms, these services were suspended during the pandemic.

To address this situation, the Ministry of Public Health in Qatar expedited the deployment of digital health services, utilizing various approaches, which included:

Virtual video consultations. This service enabled remote access to healthcare services through

video consultations.

Home delivery of medications. Medications were fulfilled and delivered to patients' homes, reducing the need for in-person visits. This service was offered through collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Health Care Corporation and Qatar Postal Services Company (Q-Post).

Self-assessment chatbot. A computer programme designed to facilitate triaging, allowing individuals to interact and receive guidance. It was available in six languages: Arabic, English, Hindi, Malayalam, Tagalog and Urdu.

Virtual health services for labourers. Specifically targeting labourers residing in labour compounds, this service provided remote access to healthcare services for both individuals with and without NCDs. It was established by the Ministry of Public Health in partnership with Qatar Red Crescent Society and the Ministry of Transport and Communications (TASMU Better Connections Program).

E-Jaza. An electronic system enabling healthcare providers to issue e-sick leaves following consultations, as necessary.

Communicable disease surveillance system and vaccination registration system. This system facilitated disease reporting, investigation, contact tracing, outbreak management, immunization management and preventive event tracking.

Currently, Qatar is working towards expanding the virtual video consultations service to cover more specialties and services, aiming to reach a broader population. Efforts are also underway to enhance the chatbot by including additional services beyond triaging. Furthermore, there are plans to extend the implementation of the E-Jaza system beyond primary health care centers and general hospitals to include the private sector.

Story originated in 2021.

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