

Harnessing the Power of Data and Digital Technology



Data and digital technology have the potential to improve access to innovative medicines and to contribute to a healthier future for European patients.



Data has been likened to the ‘oil of the 21st century’, however, unlike oil, data becomes more valuable the more you use it.

As the pace of health innovation accelerates, the EU, governments, industry, patient advocacy groups and other civil society organisations have the opportunity to work collaboratively in order to maximise the possibilities opened up through data and digital technologies.

By fully embracing these opportunities via initiatives such as [European Health Data Space](#), Europe can accelerate medical research and development and through this gain enhanced insights into unmet needs, develop a greater understanding of outcomes and patient preferences, and ultimately transition to an outcomes-based healthcare system.

In accepting and leveraging the advances in artificial intelligence, wearable sensors, the digitisation of health care records and other innovations, the EU has the potential to accelerate drug discovery efforts while decreasing R&D costs, improve understanding of diseases, and shorten clinical trial timelines, thereby delivering innovative medicines to patients more quickly.¹

The Response To COVID-19

A digital life sciences ecosystem will help accelerate the delivery of better medicines and vaccines to patients across Europe and beyond. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for rapid access to data and information to support collaborative efforts between companies, academia and governments. In addition, telemedicine and remote monitoring took on a greater role during the pandemic, such as supporting the continuity of clinical trials, reflecting a shift to a “contactless approach”. This has demonstrated a benefit of data and digital technology in times of crisis.

Responsible Innovation

As technological capabilities flourish and we are able to make better use of data through digital solutions, it is vital that we do not lose sight of our role in delivering care that puts patients at the centre of the system. To achieve this, it is essential that a regulatory environment, data interoperability standards, and privacy controls, which are in compliance with Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), are pursued to ensure that the potential of innovative technology is unlocked responsibly.²

¹ <https://www.efpia.eu/about-medicines/development-of-medicines/digital-health/>

² Bourla, Albert. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-technology-shaping-future-healthcare-why-we-must-innovate-bourla/>. Published January 25, 2018.

The potential for the EU

The EU has an opportunity to accelerate innovation, attract investment and improve competitiveness. Cross-border data transfers between EU Member States and countries outside the EU are essential in order to harness the full power of data in the healthcare space and ensure collaboration across the region and around the world. This needs to be supported by interoperability of health data to ensure that systems “talk” to each other and workable data rules.

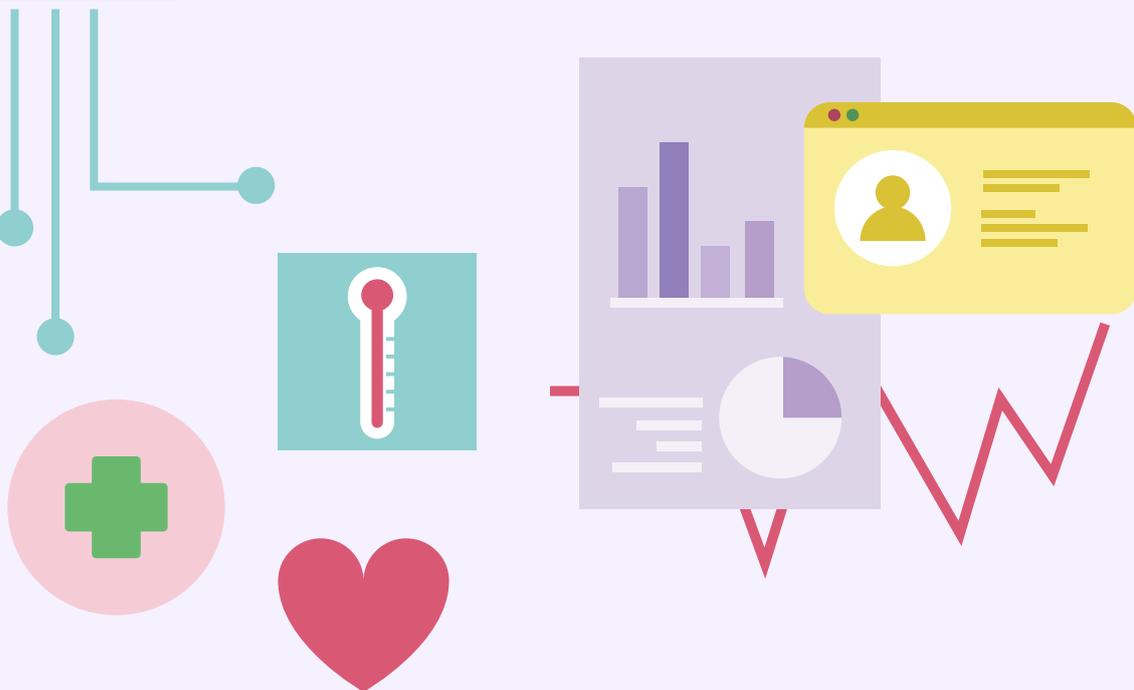
What is Pfizer doing in this area?

Data and data technologies are already at the heart of Pfizer’s clinical trials and other research. We are also increasingly using big data and digital technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, to automate repetitive processes, expedite the drug discovery and development process, and enhance patient experiences and outcomes.³ We are working with stakeholders to develop the European Health Data and Evidence Network, an Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI2) project that will make millions of anonymised data record available to enhance clinical research across Europe.⁴



Policy Recommendations

- 1 Establish greater trust in data sharing and foster the adoption and acceptance of advances in digital technologies both to improve and accelerate the development of medicines and vaccines while also allowing better insight into unmet needs, outcomes, and patient preferences.
- 2 Develop a European Health Data Space that encourages the use of digital tools and facilitates interoperability and responsible use of high quality data, both within and outside of Europe.
- 3 Ensure that high standards of patient privacy and data protection (including compliance with GDPR requirements), as well as cybersecurity, are maintained in the process of adopting data and digital technology while enabling their effective use across borders.



³ Pfizer. Win the digital race in pharma. <https://annualreview.pfizer.com/bold-moves>. Published 2021

⁴ <https://www.efpia.eu/about-medicines/development-of-medicines/digital-health/>