

Digital Therapeutics Across Communities – Rotary for Digital Health Summary Document

1) Healthcare Innovation Begins with Listening to Communities

The digital transformation of healthcare is already underway. New technologies, innovative therapeutic tools, and advanced organizational models are progressively reshaping the way health is prevented, managed, and treated.

Among these innovations, Digital Therapeutics (DTx) are emerging as an important new frontier: software-based therapeutic solutions supported by clinical validation, capable of supporting or complementing traditional models of care, particularly in the management of chronic diseases, rehabilitation, and prevention.

At the international level, these solutions are progressively entering healthcare systems. In Italy as well, Digital Therapeutics are becoming the focus of increasing institutional and regulatory attention.

International experience shows, however, that the effectiveness of healthcare innovation does not depend solely on technology or on the regulatory framework governing it. To generate tangible benefits, innovation must also be understood, accepted, and integrated within the environments where citizens, healthcare professionals, and institutions operate.

It is from this awareness that the project “Digital Therapeutics Across Communities – Rotary for Digital Health” was created: a national initiative promoted by the Italian Rotary network, aimed at listening to local communities and contributing to the development of a sustainable future for digital healthcare.

2) Understanding Innovation Through Local Communities

The project is neither a clinical trial nor a technology promotion initiative.

Rather, it is a structured community listening pathway designed to gather perceptions, needs, and opportunities related to the introduction of Digital Therapeutics within the healthcare system and society. The digital transformation of healthcare is not merely a technological or regulatory process. It is also a cultural and organizational transformation involving citizens, healthcare professionals, local institutions, and the educational sector.

Through the direct involvement of local communities, the project seeks to better understand:

- the level of awareness and understanding of Digital Therapeutics
- the degree of trust among citizens and healthcare professionals
- the availability of adequate digital skills and competencies
- the infrastructural conditions of local territories
- the main organizational or cultural barriers
- the presence of existing local experiences and initiatives

This work will make it possible to build a solid and credible knowledge base, capable of providing a realistic picture of the relationship between digital innovation and local healthcare contexts.

3) The Value of Rotary’s Contribution

In this context, Rotary can play a particularly meaningful role.

Thanks to its widespread presence within local communities, the network of Rotary Clubs is uniquely positioned to identify needs, perceptions, and experiences that often do not emerge within centralized decision-making processes.

At the same time, the organization's impartial and non-partisan nature creates opportunities for neutral and constructive dialogue, where citizens, healthcare professionals, institutions, and businesses can engage without pressure, bias, or vested interests.

Rotary's contribution is therefore primarily civic and relational: facilitating dialogue among different stakeholders and gathering authentic perspectives from local communities.

4) The Role of Rotary Clubs Within Local Communities

Rotary Clubs represent the operational core of the initiative.

Clubs are not expected to become experts in healthcare technologies, nor to promote specific solutions. Their role is to foster opportunities for listening and dialogue within their own communities.

This may involve engaging a wide range of local stakeholders, including:

- healthcare professionals
- public administrations
- patient associations
- schools and universities
- third-sector organizations
- businesses and entrepreneurial realities

Through meetings and facilitated dialogue, Rotary Clubs contribute to gathering valuable insights that help understand how digital innovation in healthcare is perceived within communities.

In this way, each Club becomes a privileged local observatory for digital healthcare.

5) A Shared Methodology for Producing Evidence

For community listening activities to generate meaningful and useful outcomes, it is essential to adopt a shared methodology.

The project uses approaches commonly applied in public health programs and healthcare policy evaluation, integrating questionnaires, interviews, and collective discussion sessions.

This approach makes it possible to collect both comparable quantitative data and qualitative insights, which are essential for understanding complex local contexts.

The methodological reference adopted by the project is the internationally recognized RE-AIM framework, widely used to evaluate the impact of innovation within healthcare systems.

This model makes it possible to observe how innovation is received within real-world contexts through five dimensions:

- **Reach** – who is reached by the initiatives
- **Effectiveness** – what awareness and value are generated
- **Adoption** – who is willing to adopt the innovation
- **Implementation** – how innovation can be integrated into real-world contexts
- **Maintenance** – which effects can be sustained over time

Through this approach, the work carried out by Rotary Clubs contributes to understanding whether — and how — Digital Therapeutics can be integrated into the everyday lives of communities.

6) From Community Listening to Public Policy

The information collected across different territories will be consolidated into local reports and subsequently into a national synthesis.

This synthesis will provide the foundation for the development of a Rotary White Paper on Digital Therapeutics, intended for institutions and stakeholders involved in the regulatory and policy-making process.

The document will offer evidence gathered from local communities together with practical recommendations aimed at supporting the future development of digital healthcare in Italy.

Conclusion

Rotary and the Future of Healthcare

The project “Digital Therapeutics Across Communities – Rotary for Digital Health” offers Rotary Clubs the opportunity to contribute to an issue of major importance for the future of the country.

By acting as facilitators of dialogue and listening within local communities, Rotary Clubs can help build a shared understanding of both the opportunities and the challenges associated with the digital transformation of healthcare.

In doing so, Rotary contributes to connecting communities, institutions, and innovation, fostering a development pathway that combines technological progress, social responsibility, and close attention to people’s real needs.

The contribution of each Club thus becomes part of a broader vision: creating the conditions for healthcare innovation to truly serve communities.

