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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

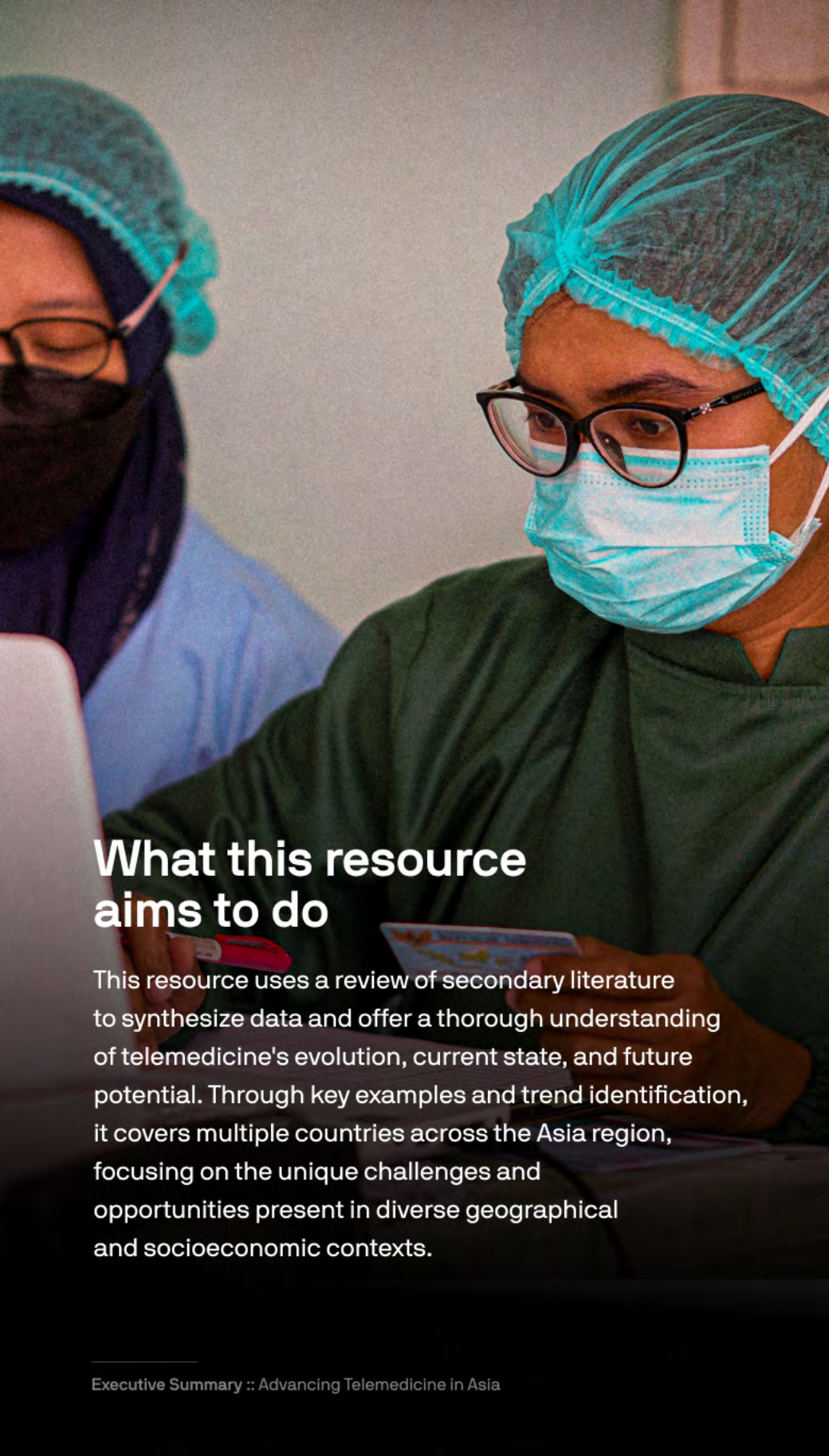
Advancing Telemedicine in Asia

Enabling Environments
& Emerging Opportunities

August 2024

Telemedicine has the potential to revolutionize health care delivery, particularly in regions with limited access to traditional health care services.

However, its adoption and scaling face significant barriers, including a lack of clear understanding of telemedicine and its components, its siloed deployment, and inadequate consideration for enabling environments such as supportive policies and technological infrastructure. This resource aims to address these challenges by providing a comprehensive analysis of telemedicine across Asia, as well as identifying key opportunities and necessary conditions for its successful implementation and growth.

A photograph of two healthcare professionals in a clinical setting. In the foreground, a person wearing a blue surgical cap, glasses, and a blue surgical mask is looking down at a small object in their hands. They are wearing green scrubs. In the background, another person wearing a blue surgical cap and a black face mask is partially visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

What this resource aims to do

This resource uses a review of secondary literature to synthesize data and offer a thorough understanding of telemedicine's evolution, current state, and future potential. Through key examples and trend identification, it covers multiple countries across the Asia region, focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities present in diverse geographical and socioeconomic contexts.



Key Highlights

Telemedicine must be viewed as an integrated innovation within a larger enabling ecosystem that includes both policy and technology factors.

A cohesive approach that incorporates telemedicine as one of many tools to enhance health care delivery is essential. This ensures that telemedicine complements and strengthens existing health care services, providing a more holistic approach to patient care.

A person is using a laptop with a scenic image on the screen. Their hands are visible on the keyboard and mouse. The background is blurred, showing other people in a room.

Technology Enablers

Successful telemedicine implementation relies on robust technological infrastructure, including high-speed connectivity, digital financial services, and a population-level digital identity.

These act as a foundational layer atop which lie health-specific infrastructural layers like electronic health records, digital registries, and health-specific applications such as telemedicine.

Once a thorough situational understanding has been established, partners can engage in collaborative efforts that support governments in designing substantial, multi-year costed investments, guided by an implementation roadmap for multiple interoperable digital public infrastructure (DPI) and digital public health infrastructure (DPI-H) components.

Such investments would greatly benefit the implementation of truly sustainable and scalable telemedicine solutions.



Policy Requirements

Supportive policies are crucial for addressing regulatory challenges and integrating telemedicine into national health care systems.



Enabling policies include those that directly underpin telemedicine, such as data protection, prescription standards, and telemedicine policies, as well as broader digital health strategies that embed telemedicine within the country's larger digital health ecosystem.

While partners cannot directly get involved in policymaking, they may encourage awareness and monitoring and recommend improvements based on best practices, thus facilitating telemedicine adoption while protecting patient rights and ensuring quality care.



Identified Opportunities

As an initial step, this resource identifies three key opportunities to advance and scale telemedicine across Asia, each with specific areas for assistance, leveraging the enablers as a foundation.

OPPORTUNITY #1

Innovative approaches to implement and expand telemedicine in geographically spread out-areas

Implementing telemedicine in island nations and remote Asian countries can address significant health care delivery challenges.

The hub-and-spoke model, which has been successfully deployed in a few countries, fits well with the existing health delivery structures of these nations.

To leverage this opportunity, assistance may be needed in developing a roadmap and toolkit for establishing telemedicine hubs and spokes across a country. Further, fostering public-private partnerships within a country to enhance connectivity, and finally, encouraging peer to peer learning/exchange visits between Asian countries to learn from and overcome challenges to deployment.



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OPPORTUNITY #2

Integration of AI and emerging technologies in telemedicine

Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies, such as IoT, in a rights-respecting manner has **the potential to enhance telemedicine capabilities and effectiveness.**

However, more information is needed for broader AI deployment. To leverage this opportunity, assistance may be directed toward creating evaluation and funding mechanisms for responsible AI innovation, building a robust evidence base through research and use-case development, and strengthening government and ecosystem capacity through AI research, development training programs, and alignment with government priorities.



3

OPPORTUNITY #3

Leveraging community health worker (CHW) networks in telemedicine

Utilizing existing in-country CHW networks across Asia can expand the access and reach of telemedicine, particularly in rural and underserved communities. **Special attention must be paid to not overburdening CHWs with additional technology but rather integrating it as a supportive mechanism.** Initial assistance may include establishing comprehensive training programs to equip CHWs with telemedicine skills, integrating telemedicine into CHWs' daily workflows to enhance rather than burden their roles, and providing ongoing support and mentorship to help CHWs effectively navigate and use telemedicine technologies.



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