

Abstract citation ID: ckad160.1223
eHealth profile of patients with diabetes

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Background:

Digital health technology can be useful to improve the health of patients with diabetes, to support patient-centered care, and self-management. In this cross-sectional study, we described the eHealth profile of patients with diabetes, based on their use of digital health technology, and its association with socio-demographic characteristics.

Methods:

We used data from the “Qualité Diabète Valais” cohort study, conducted in one region of Switzerland (Canton Valais) since 2020. Participants with type 1 or type 2 diabetes completed questionnaires on sociodemographic characteristics and on the use of digital health technology. We defined eHealth profiles based on three features, i.e., ownership or use of 1) internet-connected devices (smartphone, tablet, or computer), 2) mHealth applications, and 3) connected health tools (activity sensor, smart weight scale, or connected blood glucose meter). We assessed the association between sociodemographic characteristics and participants’ eHealth profiles using stratified analyses and logistic regression models.

Results:

398 participants (38% women) with a mean age of 65 years were included. The vast majority (94%) were Swiss citizens or bi-national; 14% had a primary level education, 51% a secondary level, and 32% a tertiary level. Some 75% of participants had type 2 diabetes. Some 90% of the participants owned internet-connected devices, 43% used mHealth applications, and 44% owned a connected health tool. Older age and a lower educational level were associated with lower odds of all features of the eHealth profile.

Conclusions:

While most participants owned internet-connected devices, only about half of them used mHealth applications or owned connected health tools. Older participants and those with a lower educational level were less likely to use digital health technology. eHealth implementation strategies need to consider these sociodemographic patterns among patients with diabetes.

Key messages:

- eHealth use among patients with diabetes was associated with younger age and higher education.
- eHealth strategies need to consider that patients at higher risk of complications are those who use eHealth the least.