

## **Pilot study: Investigating the use of digital tools in ambulatory physiotherapy practices and its impact on patient-therapist interaction**

The use of digital technology in health- and rehabilitation care has become increasingly important and its potential to improve therapeutic interventions, monitoring and self-management has been recognised. However, research on its actual use within (Swiss) ambulatory physiotherapy settings is scarce.

This pilot project is undertaken in partnership with Medbase group ([www.medbase.ch](http://www.medbase.ch)), which owns over 50 medical and physiotherapy outpatient clinics in German- and French speaking Switzerland.

Adopting a mixed method approach, the study looks at three outpatient clinics of German speaking Switzerland, combining: a) ethnographic observational data on the use (or absence of use) of digital tools in physiotherapy; b) video-data featuring physiotherapeutic consultations, during which professionals introduce and use digital tools that patients are to handle themselves at home; and c) data from semi-structured qualitative interviews exploring participants' perceptions of digitalised physiotherapeutic practice either realised in face-to-face interactions, or when the physiotherapist and the patient organise a remote consultation.

On the basis of these complementary data, the project seeks to tackle the following three research questions: a) why does the adoption of digital technology in ambulatory physiotherapy remain low, b) how is digital technology concretely introduced and used within physiotherapy consultation and how does its utilisation impact on physiotherapist-patient interaction, and finally c) how do users subjectively perceive its deployment within physiotherapeutic practice (during consultation or at home).

Beyond the objectives set by the distinct research questions, this pilot study seeks, on the one hand, to critically assess if the

complementary methods of investigation allow to generate the expected new insights in order to contribute significantly to the research questions outlined above.

On the other hand, it aims to evaluate the feasibility of the adopted mixed method approach for a future large-scale study on this central topic for applied research on health and rehabilitation care in the 21st century.

### **Research team**

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### **Project partner**

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### **Funding**

HES-SO Health

### **Duration**

18 months