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Australia working towards reducing emissions in healthcare

November 7, 2022 | News

The healthcare industry is the fifth largest contributor to planetary pollution



Australia-based Monash University experts, along with an international group of researchers, have highlighted the need to accurately identify the carbon footprint of digital health interventions to help move towards more environmentally sustainable healthcare.

Adapting digital health technologies like telehealth, electronic health records, usage of artificial intelligence (AI) and the internet of things etc. would help to reduce carbon emissions in the sector.

Published recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, the new research reviewed 3299 studies and found that across the world there are no standard tools or methods of measuring the carbon footprint of digital health interventions.

Also, current approaches to environmental impact assessment for digital health technologies are fragmented and tend to focus on a single component of the technology, for example, energy consumption, rather than overall impact from design to implementation then disposal.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Zerina Tomkins from Monash University's School of Nursing and Midwifery said governments, hospitals and healthcare practitioners are keen to reduce emissions contributed by the sector but need the right tools to implement sustainable change.

The research team's future focus is to develop a framework and associated tools to encourage every level of the healthcare sector including governing bodies, leaders, organisations, healthcare workers and practitioners to design, develop and implement greener digital healthcare solutions.