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From Strategy to Synergy: Paving Ontario's Proactive Path in Precision Medicine with Collaboration and Visionary Leadership

Abbas ZAVAR[a] [1] and Razieh POORANDY[a]
[a] *Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada*
ORCiD ID: Abbas Zavar https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0639-2765

Abstract. Ontario is shifting to a Precision Medicine (PM) model, which emphasizes tailored patient care, an initiative reflected in the formation of Ontario Health Teams. However, this shift faces significant data governance, policy formulation, and technology integration hurdles. To overcome these barriers, we advocate for a comprehensive PM framework to orchestrate collaboration among healthcare providers, policymakers, and technologists. This framework enhances data management, propels digital health innovations, and uphold ethical standards in AI applications. Effective deployment of this framework is crucial for actualizing PM's promise in Ontario, potentially revolutionizing healthcare delivery.

Keywords. Precision Medicine, framework, ecosystem, policymaking, digital health

1. Introduction

Ontario is at the cusp of a healthcare transformation, shifting from the traditional 'one-size-fits-all' evidence-based medicine to a more patient-centric approach. The creation of Ontario Health Teams (OHT) is a testament to this paradigm shift, aiming to improve patient outcomes through cohesive care teams [1]. Precision Medicine (PM) stands out as an ideal manifestation of this patient-centric philosophy, promising individualized care tailored to each patient's unique genetic, environmental, lifestyle and social determinants of health (SDoH) factors [2,3]. The optimal brief description for Precision Medicine is that it involves delivering the right clinical intervention—whether that be diagnosis, treatment, or prevention—at the right time, tailored specifically to the right individual [2]. PM stands as a beacon of modern medical innovation with the promise to revolutionize healthcare outcomes by ensuring interventions are tailored to individuals [3].

Despite its promise, the PM journey in Ontario encounters various hurdles, as highlighted by a recent study conducted by our team (Zavar, 2022) [2]. The healthcare system faces challenges due to inconsistent data governance across different health system levels and the complexity of federal and provincial acts such as PHIPA and FIPPA. These challenges are compounded by the lack of data-sharing agreements, which results in information blockages. Within organizations, intricate privacy rules

[1] Corresponding author: Abbas Zavar, abbas.zavar@utoronto.ca

further complicate data sharing and management. Furthermore, there are noticeable gaps in record linkage and data interoperability, alongside inconsistencies in data standards. The system also grapples with data capture, access, and overall quality deficiencies. These issues are magnified by challenges in managing big data and the inadequacy of the current IT infrastructure [2].

The obstacles faced extend beyond just data creation, dissemination, and preservation. They also delve into areas of policy formulation, innovation, and digital healthcare advancements. Such barriers underscore the prevalent issue of essential data being kept isolated and not being shared. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of alignment in policy design, innovative efforts, and the progression of digital healthcare solutions—elements that are crucial for an effective PM strategy [2,4,5].

As one of Canada's most populous provinces, Ontario's healthcare infrastructure significantly influences the national landscape, and the potential of PM to redefine healthcare in this province is vast. Yet, to tap into this potential, a synchronized, comprehensive, and well-strategized approach is imperative.

2. Discussion

Designing a framework for PM necessitates a holistic approach that views PM as an intricate ecosystem. Just as every element within a natural ecosystem is interconnected and can positively or negatively influence one another, the PM domain functions similarly. Within the PM ecosystem, various elements - from healthcare professionals and policymakers to socioeconomic factors and technology providers - are all intertwined. Their individual actions and decisions reverberate throughout the system, having cascading effects on every other component. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of developing a comprehensive PM framework that does not just focus on the internal mechanics of healthcare but also factors in external influences.

A PM framework is a dynamic set of principles and strategies for the complex field of Precision Medicine. It is an adaptable guide that integrates scientific, technological, regulatory, and ethical considerations to enhance patient care and support the health community. Adopting this ecosystem viewpoint, the PM framework is crafted to be adaptive, resilient, and capable of aligning various elements to enhance patient care and benefit the health community at large [6,7].

The urgency for a PM framework arises from numerous challenges within the medical ecosystem. It highlights the critical need for cohesive leadership and harmonized policy-making. Here's a deep dive into the pivotal roles the framework seeks to serve:

- Guidance for System Leaders: PM is fast becoming the front-runner in healthcare advancement. For system leaders, it is essential to adapt to the financial aspects of implementing precision approaches, notably in areas like genomic sequencing and data analysis. They must focus on bridging the gap between conventional treatments and cutting-edge technologies to ensure equitable access to healthcare [8].
- Policy-making Tool: PM presents unique challenges that necessitate evidence-based policies. Implementing these policies should be backed by robust data and address current challenges, such as evidence gaps and an unprepared workforce, to ensure effective execution [9].

- A Beacon for Digital Health Developers: With the promise of enhanced outcomes, especially for chronic diseases, digital health solutions can be at the forefront of revolutionizing patient care. The key lies in these tools' rapid development and deployment, thus ensuring patients benefit from speed-to-market innovations [10].
- Resource for Researchers: PM is not just for a select few. There is a need to debunk misconceptions and understand that precision approaches have the potential to impact a broad patient demographic. Researchers can play a pivotal role by focusing on inclusive studies that cater to diverse patient populations [11].
- Framework for Pharmaceuticals: The path to harnessing the full potential of PM is laden with obstacles, from ethical dilemmas to data security. Pharmaceuticals must focus on agile governance and processes that adapt to these challenges while ensuring patient care remains at the center of their pursuits [12].
- Agile Governance in PM: Implementing an agile governance process that can improve government coordination, utilize public-private partnerships, and foster a nimble approach in the rapidly evolving PM field [12].

3. Recommendations

- Develop a Comprehensive PM Framework: Emphasizing a holistic approach to PM, a strategic plan should encompass every element of the PM ecosystem. This includes elements both within and external to healthcare. Effective integration ensures that policies across various levels are harmonized, leadership strategies align coherently, innovations are coordinated, and standards for data, regulations, and other essential components are consistently met [13, 14]. Also, it is essential to have a well-defined and efficient strategy that captures the full scope of PM, integrating genetic, genomic, clinical, environmental, lifestyle and SDoH data [3].
- Invest in Data Infrastructure: To facilitate the progression of PM, embrace the potential of recent technological breakthroughs, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies. These tools promise robust data collection, secure storage, and in-depth analysis capabilities [15,16].
- Digital Health Solution Innovation: A well-structured PM framework is a foundational guide for PM, stimulating innovation in digital health. It provides solution developers with a clear roadmap, emphasizing seamless integration and reducing redundancy, ensuring the inter-compatibility of digital health solutions. Furthermore, a cohesive framework promotes developers' adoption of uniform standards, leading to consistent user experiences across various platforms, whether for patients or healthcare professionals [17,18].
- Digital Health Policy Layer: The digital health policy layer is crucial for aligning the PM ecosystem with existing norms and regulations. A competent PM framework ensures regulatory compliance, prioritizes patient data privacy and security, and integrates advanced cybersecurity measures. It also addresses ethical concerns related to data usage and gains trust by emphasizing stakeholder engagement and promoting transparency in data

management practices. This comprehensive approach ensures widespread acceptance and confidence in digital health solutions [19-21].

- Data Governance and Advanced AI Implementation: A holistic PM approach demands the management and utilization of extensive data characterized by the various "Vs" of big data, including Volume, Velocity, Variety, Veracity, and Value. Effective handling of these datasets necessitates a rigorous data governance framework that guarantees data quality, security, and usability, as well as a detailed framework of data architecture covering all aspects, from data lakes to ETL processes [22].

Simultaneously, to tap into big data's potential, introducing advanced AI algorithms is pivotal. These AI solutions must be harmonized, integrated, and designed to work across platforms collaboratively. It's imperative for these AI algorithms to undergo rigorous training and validation processes to mitigate biases and errors. Ensuring an ethical deployment that refrains from inadvertent discrimination or decisions jeopardizing patient care is also fundamental for an inclusive PM strategy [17,20].

Incorporating these recommendations into the PM framework will not only facilitate the creation of a more holistic and patient-centric ecosystem but will also foster trust and collaboration among stakeholders in the digital health domain. By focusing strategically on big data management and the ethical and efficient implementation of AI solutions, the PM framework can ensure that healthcare solutions are both cutting-edge and trustable.

4. Conclusion

From Reactive to Proactive: In today's rapidly evolving medical landscape, a mere reactionary stance is no longer sufficient. A genuinely patient-centric system is not just about addressing immediate concerns or implementing short-lived interventions. It is about foreseeing future needs, understanding the broader context of healthcare, and crafting long-term strategies. The philosophy of Precision Medicine exemplifies this forward-thinking mindset. Instead of a narrow focus, PM demands a holistic perspective integrating genetic, environmental, lifestyle and SDoH factors to offer tailored healthcare solutions. To truly harness the potential of PM, we must proactively channel our resources, ensuring every tool, technology, and talent is oriented towards a unified vision. This involves creating a detailed and cohesive framework for the PM ecosystem, ensuring all components work harmoniously towards enhancing patient outcomes and advancing medical science.

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