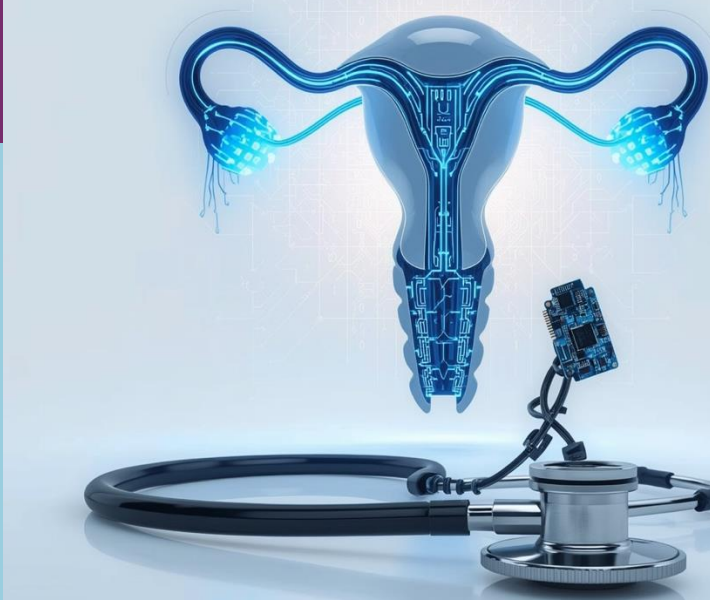


The Digital Transformation in Obstetrics and Gynaecology: A Call for Specialist Involvement

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Introduction

Healthcare is entering a new digital era, and Obstetrics & Gynaecology must be part of the transformation. Digital tools such as electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine, and virtual MDTs are already improving patient care, streamlining workflows, and enhancing communication across services. Yet many clinicians continue to face daily frustrations: fragmented systems that hinder data access, poor integration between services like A&E and primary care, and patients missing appointments because clinic letters arrive late or not at all. These issues limit the full potential of digital innovation.

We strongly believe that clinicians should be pivotal in steering digital transformation in our specialty. Leading, encouraging and promoting innovation, requires essential knowledge of the landscape of digital health but access to training remains inconsistent.

We propose upskilling clinicians in Digital Health; facilitating understanding of the Impact of Digital Transformation in O&G; helping them recognize the role of O&G specialists in driving change and inspiring action among O&G trainees and the RCOG.

The issues

Digital poverty—defined as limited access to the technology, skills, or infrastructure needed to engage with digital services—poses a significant barrier to equitable healthcare.

The concept of the “digital divide,” (Figure 1) as a spectrum, highlights the stark contrast between the benefits of digital inclusion, such as access to telemedicine, online antenatal care, and health education, and the exclusion faced by vulnerable populations, including women from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, older patients, and those with limited digital literacy.

Benefits of Digital Transformation The role of clinicians

- **Efficiency:** EHRs and telemedicine streamline workflows and reduce duplication of investigations.
- **Access:** Digital tools increase access to services for underserved and rural populations.
- **AI & Big Data:** Artificial intelligence is enhancing diagnostics in fetal ultrasound and cervical cytology; predictive analytics help forecast complications such as preterm birth and postpartum haemorrhage.
- **Patient Empowerment:** Femtech and mobile apps help patients track cycles, receive results, and communicate with providers.

Barriers to Adoption

- **Technological:** Infrastructure disparities and poor system integration.
- **Ethical/Legal:** Concerns over data privacy, consent, and cross-platform sharing.
- **Cultural:** Resistance to change, fears of depersonalisation or clinician replacement.
- **Training Gaps:** Limited access to digital leadership or health informatics education.

O&G clinicians are uniquely placed to influence the development and adoption of digital systems. Our work spans multiple settings; community, primary, secondary and tertiary care requiring seamless communication and real-time data sharing. We understand the complexity of clinical care and can guide the design of user-friendly, safe and equitable digital tools. Without clinician leadership, digital innovations risk being unfit for purpose or exacerbating health inequalities.

Calls to action for O&G trainees and consultants:

- Attend Digital Health courses such as those offered by Imperial College or NHS programmes.
- Advocate for the inclusion of digital transformation in the RCOG training curriculum.
- Take part in hospital or Trust digital working groups and projects.
- Prepare to lead as future Digital Obstetricians and Digital Gynaecologists.

We wish to raise awareness of the roles of Digital Obstetricians and Digital Midwives under the ‘Digital Maternity Leaders Community of the Future’ NHS Group.

Conclusions

The NHS Digital Transformation is happening, and it is critical that O&G professionals are empowered with the skills, tools and information to participate in the process. However, it is crucial that digital exclusion is addressed to avoid inequality and inequity. Our call to action is for specialists to engage, innovate, and advocate for a digitally forward future in O&G.

With the introduction of robotic surgery and Artificial Intelligence, AI in gynaecology, it is also time for the role of the Digital Gynaecologist.

The future is Digital and AI; thus, our O&G specialty needs to get on-board and not be left behind!

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