

2024



EMPOWERING ASEAN HEALTH:

The Strategic Role of Self-Care for
a Sustainable Healthcare System

FOREWORD

In an era marked by rapid advancements in healthcare and significant demographic shifts, the importance of self-care cannot be overstated. Self-care empowers individuals to take charge of their health, manage chronic conditions, and prevent diseases, thereby fostering a healthier and more resilient society. The Council has been a strong advocate for the adoption of self-care across ASEAN, recognising its importance in developing a resilient healthcare system for a society that is gearing up towards an ageing society by 2050. I am proud to present this comprehensive paper on the strategic role of self-care in creating a sustainable healthcare system.

Our paper underscores the necessity to integrate self-care into national health strategies across ASEAN. The growing prevalence of chronic diseases and the increasing pressures on healthcare systems demand innovative solutions. Self-care represents a viable path forward, offering not only economic benefits but also enhanced health outcomes for individuals and communities.

This paper is a continuation of our report published at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While the previous report underscored consumer sentiments towards self-care, this report highlights the beneficial role self-care plays for healthcare practitioners in alleviating healthcare burdens. Further, the report also delves into the multifaceted benefits of self-care, highlighting its potential to reduce healthcare costs, and promote a proactive approach to health and well-being. Through case studies and best practices highlighted, we illustrate how ASEAN member states can harness the power of self-care to build a robust and sustainable healthcare infrastructure for years to come.

Finally, this paper also addresses the critical role of public-private partnerships in advancing self-care. By fostering collaboration between governments, healthcare providers, industry stakeholders, and consumers, we can create a safe and enabling environment that supports self-care initiatives and maximises their impact.

I invite policymakers, healthcare professionals, and industry leaders to explore the insights and recommendations presented in this paper. Together, we can pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable future for all ASEAN citizens.



Chris Humphrey
Executive Director
EU-ASEAN Business Council



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INTRODUCTION

In the quest for developing sustainable healthcare systems worldwide, self-care emerges as a pivotal enabler. Its significance lies not only in its capacity to alleviate economic burdens and address global manpower shortages in healthcare, but also in its ability to complement with, and enhance the roles of, healthcare practitioners. In the context of changing consumer behaviours, self-care catalyses empowerment and proactive health management. Moreover, its integration into existing healthcare finance schemes underscores its adaptability and potential for widespread implementation.

As we delve deeper into healthcare policy development, self-care facilitates collaborative efforts across multiple stakeholders. This collective endeavour – involving the public sector, healthcare professionals, private sector entities, and consumers – is, in turn, crucial in creating an enabling environment that drives the advancement and realisation of self-care initiatives.

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) recognises the importance of self-care in achieving ASEAN Health Cluster goals.¹

In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council conducted a survey across four ASEAN markets – Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam – to reflect consumer attitudes in ASEAN towards self-care, and the self-care remedies practiced by individuals for managing minor ailments.²

Building up from the 2020 report focusing on identifying consumer sentiments toward self-care, this paper is a continuation of the work undertaken by the Council in advancing self-care in ASEAN. This paper aims to highlight the complementary role of self-care as a central component of healthcare.



2020

The paper sets the foundation for self-care and:

- Uncovered consumer sentiments towards self-care, and;
- Identified the self-care habits practiced select ASEAN Member States



2024

The current paper will:

- Highlight the complementary role of self-care for Healthcare Practitioners (HCPs)
- Showcase importance of self-care from endorsements by key HCPs across the region
- Emphasise the economic value of self-care for healthcare systems
- Underscore the criteria for; and importance of an enabling environment that promotes self-care to unlock its merits for ASEAN citizens

ASEAN Consumer Attitudes to Self-Care

EU-ABC surveyed 1000 individuals across four markets in ASEAN in 2020 to seek their sentiments to self-care. The findings from the survey revealed a growing preference of consumer sentiments towards self-care:

Believe that medication for minor ailments should be available more widely, such as in supermarkets / mini-markets / convenience shops.

83%

Are more likely to practice self-care at home without the consultation of healthcare professional as a result of COVID-19.

65%

Are less comfortable visiting a healthcare provider now than compared to before the pandemic.

55%

Perception regarding the importance of self-care grew from 54.3% pre-pandemic.³

86.6%

The EU-ABC also takes this opportunity to acknowledge that organisations like:



have been strong advocates in pushing for the adoption of self-care for better and long-term health on a global level. This report will leverage on the extensive work these organisations have done and engage their existing datasets to showcase the merits of self-care for ASEAN in a post-pandemic era.^{4 5 6}

SELF-CARE & HEALTH LITERACY



SELF-CARE LITERACY

Self-care literacy refers to the knowledge, motivation and competencies of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, and maintain health and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.



HEALTH LITERACY

WHO defines Health Literacy as the ability of individuals to “gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health” for themselves, their families and their communities.

Advancing self-care across the ASEAN region faces barriers that have contributed to its underutilisation despite its merits. The two main obstacles are identified as follows:

- Relatively low health literacy levels amongst citizens⁷
- Disproportionate regulatory barriers hindering the full potential of self-care



WHO published a series of reports on health literacy in November 2022. While the reports advances this approach for non-communicable diseases, its lessons are cross-cutting across healthcare.¹⁰

Health literacy has been recognised as a critical determinant of health in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Shanghai Declaration in 2016 and has been recast as a collective practice of a community working to enable and build knowledge, rather than placing responsibility on the individual.⁹

The call by the WHO for integrative approaches, involving a range of community-based organisations across sectors, to develop health literacy interventions, is an applicable lesson in enhancing healthcare resilience. Their rally is clear: **a whole-of-society approach is needed to curate effective responses via to ensure healthcare services are more accessible and user friendly.**

IMPROVING HEALTH LITERACY: A Whole-of-Society Approach

The Council and our members are strong proponents of a public-private partnership (PPP) model to strengthen healthcare delivery and simplify health education to those who need them most. Below, we highlight a case study to showcase how PPP address healthcare needs specific to local communities:



In the Philippines and Vietnam, Opella. (previously known as Sanofi Consumer Healthcare (CHC)), is addressing the critical issue of childhood diarrhoea caused by inadequate access to clean food, water, and hygiene.

Here’s how the industry have been contributing and making a difference:



Hygiene Education and Infrastructure

Sanofi Consumer Healthcare partnered through Enterogermina to provide hygiene education in schools, emphasizing the importance of gut health through proper hygiene practices and lifestyle changes.

Vietnam

The programme includes constructing proper restroom facilities in schools. These facilities improve sanitation and support to reduce the risk of infections. To date Sanofi CHC has build over 134 Toilet Rooms & 80 Hand Wash Facilities reaching over 40 million consumers.



Philippines

Sanofi supports the Todo Tatag learning playground, which educates children about hygiene practices. Additionally, a school bus serves as a mobile handwashing station providing hygiene education. To date Sanofi CHC has built 57 Hand Wash Facilities, 9 Water Filter & 2 Water Tanks and 3 community kitchens and reached over 14 million consumers through this campaign.



Collaboration with NGOs

Sanofi collaborates with Save the Children in the Philippines and the Hope Foundation in Vietnam to implement these initiatives.

Together, they aim to reduce childhood mortality due to diarrhoea and promote better health outcomes for children in these communities.^{10 11}



Opella.

By empowering children with knowledge and improving infrastructure, Sanofi CHC is making a positive impact on gut health and overall well-being for communities.

Addressing Asia's Triple Burden of Malnutrition Through Partnerships and Education

Asia faces the intricate challenge of the triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and rising obesity. FrieslandCampina's latest Southeast Asia Nutrition Surveys (SEANUTS) II study highlights significant deficiencies, with over 70% of children across Southeast Asia not meeting the recommended daily intake of calcium, and 84% deficient in vitamin D. These gaps contribute to high rates of stunting and wasting among children.

FrieslandCampina is committed to promoting a healthy diet and lifestyle through partnerships across different markets, including Vietnam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Our nutrition education and school milk programs, such as Malaysia's initiative reaching 78,000 students and distributing 21 million packs

of milk, ensure healthier options for children early on. Through interactive school-based workshops and campaigns, the initiative educates students on how dairy and a balanced diet contribute to their long-term health. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate nutritional needs but also aims to instill lifelong healthy consumption habits.



The Nutrient Gap Initiative¹²

As part of Bayer's mission "Health for All, Hunger for None," Bayer launched The Nutrient Gap Initiative (NGI) to expand access to essential vitamins and minerals to 50 million people in underserved communities per year by 2030. With the leadership in agriculture & nutritional supplements, Bayer is uniquely positioned to help improve access to nutritious food and safety-net supplementation.

The Nutrient Gap Initiative helps close the nutrient gap by addressing the three main barriers to accessing essential vitamins and minerals:

INTERVENTION

Many underserved communities lack access to vitamins and minerals because they cannot afford them or cannot find them nearby. Bayer brings nutritious food (fruit, vegetables, grains) and supplementation within physical and financial reach of those who need it most.

EDUCATION

Many vulnerable populations lack knowledge about proper nutrition, the importance of a vitamins and minerals and the value of supplementation when needed. The programme empowers people with the information they need to take their health into their own hands.

ADVOCACY

Governments and policy makers can have large-scale impact when they prioritise access to affordable and nutritious food, health literacy and make essential supplementation a standards of care. Bayer join forces with partners to enable an ecosystem to advocate for access to good nutrition.

Since its launch in 2021, The Nutrient Gap Initiative has impacted more than 20 million people in underserved communities.



Partnership with Vitamin Angels

This holistic partnership aims in expanding access to Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS or prenatal vitamins). Vitamin Angels is a public health nutrition organization working to improve health and economic equity by increasing access to nutrition interventions for underserved pregnant women and children globally.

The programme incorporates local interventions with a 180-day supply of MMS, a custom-made nutrition curriculum for healthcare providers and moms-to-be as well as work with local governments to incorporate MMS as the standard of care. The programme directly impacts 4 million mothers and their babies annually.



Mercy Corps Indonesia is a local organisation based in Jakarta, which aims to empower Indonesians to build healthy, productive and resilient communities. Mercy Corps Indonesia helps communities recover from the crises they face and turn them into opportunities to improve quality of life. This collaboration includes vital education and information to families focused nutrition through the programme of Better Life Farming.

The Better Life Farming Alliance supports smallholder farmers in Low Middle Income Countries (LMICs) to improve their livelihoods, including access to high-quality agricultural products (seeds, crop protection), educational training and other supportive services. The programme helps these farmers provide nutrient-rich foods to their communities. Starting in Mexico and Indonesia, the centers will now begin to also offer both general and prenatal nutrition education, in partnership with NGOs and self-care product distribution.

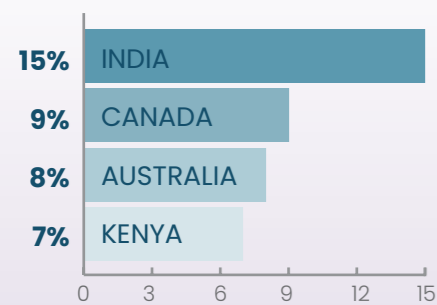
Partnership with Mercy Corps & Better Life Farming



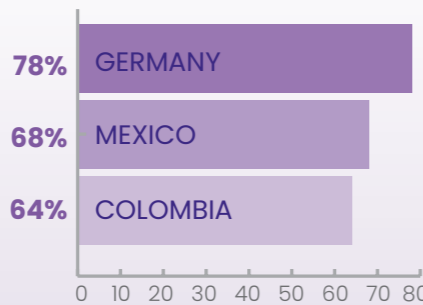
SELF-CARE: Are We Ready?

According to the consumer surveys examined in the Self Care Readiness Index, a high number of people still have problems learning about their health because of difficulty understanding written information.¹³

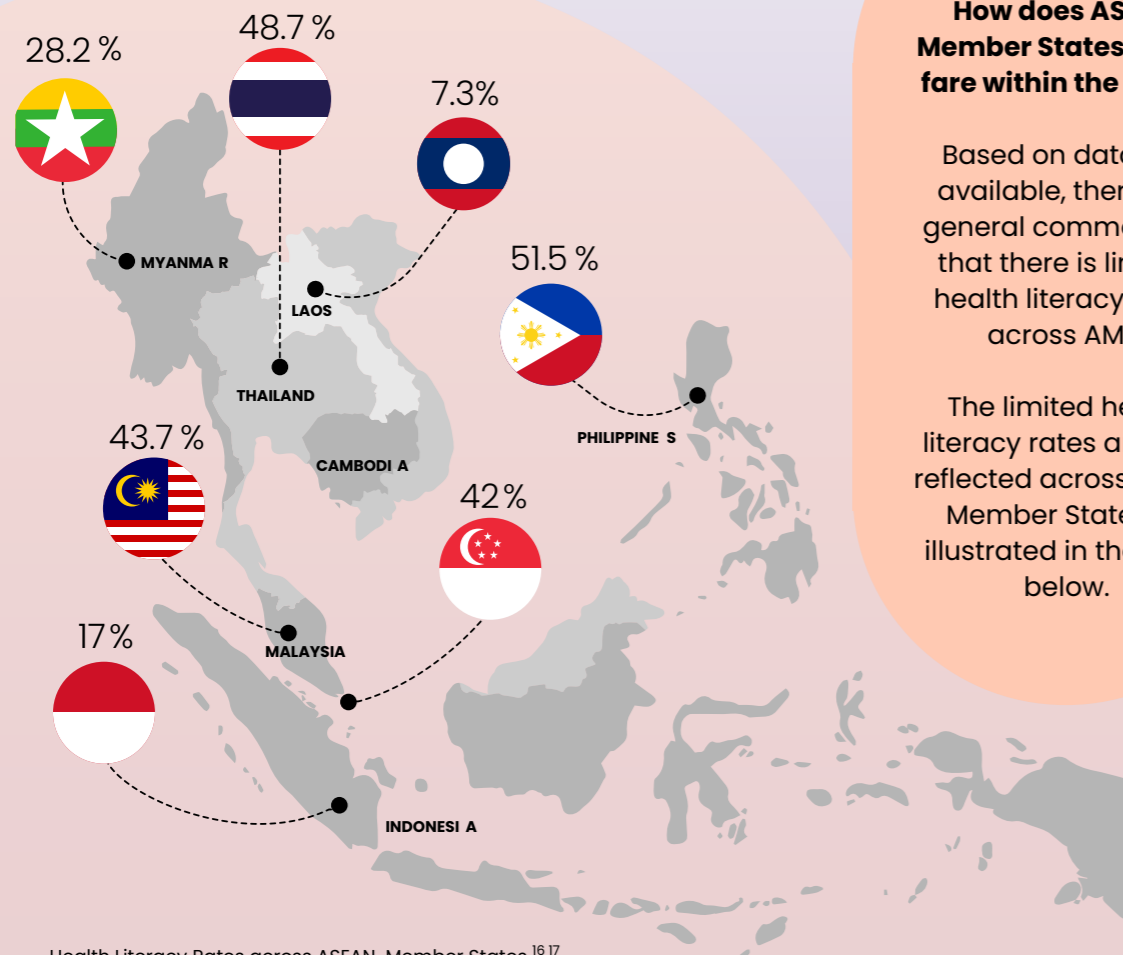
Globally, India, Canada, Australia and Kenya logged some of the lowest numbers in terms of comprehending health information.



In contrast, people in Colombia, Mexico, and Germany logged the following results:



These countries reflected positive results, with only a small percentage citing that they never or rarely have difficulties understanding written health information.



How does ASEAN Member States (AMS) fare within the scale?

Based on datasets available, there is a general commonality that there is limited health literacy rates across AMS.

The limited health literacy rates are also reflected across ASEAN Member States as illustrated in the map below.

Health Literacy Rates across ASEAN Member States ^{16 17}

BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

Self-care offers an array of benefits that extend beyond individual well-being to encompass significant economic value and to drive health literacy.



The WHO defines self-care as the following^{18 19}

Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.

Self-care refers to the holistic activities, practices, and products – both medicinal, devices, and nutritive – that a person can adopt to improve their health and well-being.

In particular, self-care involves:²⁰

- Making healthy lifestyle choices
- Avoiding unhealthy lifestyle habits
- Making responsible use of prescription and non-prescription medicines
- Self-recognition of self-treatable symptoms
- Self-monitoring
- Self-management

At its core, self-care empowers individuals to take proactive steps in preserving and enhancing their health responsibly, reducing the burden on healthcare systems to foster long-term sustainability. On a *micro-level*, by embracing self-care, individuals actively participate in their own health journey responsibility, and this

can mitigate or manage the risk of chronic illnesses. On a *macro-scale*, by better managing individual health, this reduces the frequency and need for medical interventions. In short, self-care has been proven to reduce the strain on healthcare systems and lowers healthcare costs for both governments and consumers.

In the context of ASEAN, the prevalence of preventable and chronic diseases is rising at an alarming rate, exerting a significant burden on healthcare budgets.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as:

- hypertension
- diabetes, and
- heart disease

account for a substantial portion of healthcare costs and are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality.

The ageing population further exacerbates this issue, as older adults are more susceptible to chronic conditions that require ongoing management and treatment.

This demographic shift underscores the urgency of ensuring not only longer lives but also healthier lives for the elderly.

Promoting self-care is essential for healthy ageing, enabling individuals to manage their health proactively and prevent the onset or progression of chronic diseases. Self-care practices, such as regular physical activity, a balanced diet, and routine health monitoring, can significantly reduce the incidence of NCDs and alleviate the strain on healthcare systems.²¹






ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE



The cultivation of responsible self-care habits fosters increased productivity and resilience which leads to enhanced workforce performance and economic stability. The paper published by the Council in 2020 confirms this as one of the merits of self-care.²²


Self-care is viewed by many to have the potential to yield significant cost savings for the healthcare system by reducing physician visits and assuring efficient use of public resources.

Based on the 2020 EU-ABC report on self-care:²³

- 

Every \$1 spent on Over-The-Counter (OTC) medication...  saves the broader healthcare budget more than \$7.
- 

Improving citizens' knowledge of self-care...  is projected to save up to USD 550 million in national healthcare costs.
- 

If self-care were to become a more regular practice against the common disease areas...  key to unlocking savings of USD 2.5 to 4.2 billion related to annual economic outcomes, and could reduce up to USD 0.6 billion for avoidable treatment costs.

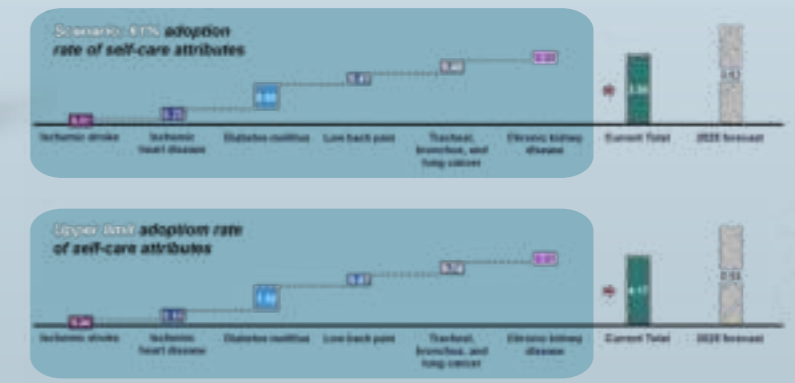


Scan Me



A case study by KPMG in Vietnam revealed that if Vietnamese people take more active steps in their self-care routines and drive up self-care adoption rates, the healthcare system could see potential savings between USD2.5 billion to USD 4.2 billion per annum.

When the projections were calculated to 2055, "the economic impact is estimated to be upwards of USD 6 billion".²⁴ This further confirms the economic benefits of self-care.



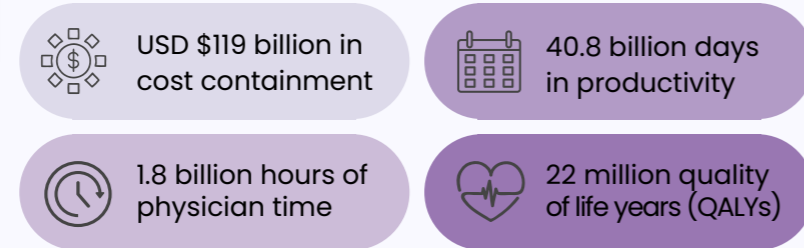
KPMG analysis on improved productivity generated with active Self-Care in Vietnam

GLOBAL SELF-CARE FEDERATION



The report is the first global research project analysing the worldwide value and impact of self-care, across 155 countries. Importantly, it is the first study to include data from low- and middle-income countries, providing a unique global perspective.²⁵

The report quantified the economic value of self-care and revealed the global savings because of self-care to be the following:



While statistics for simply the ASEAN Member States (AMS) alone are unavailable, in 2022, the Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF) conducted a deeper dive to validate this claim by calculating the economic value of self-care across 155 countries.²⁶

With the exception of Brunei, all nine ASEAN Member States were categorised under the East Asia & Pacific grouping. For this group, the cost containment and time savings are captured as follows.²⁷

Overall Cost Savings for East Asia & Pacific Group Current vs Future (with nine ASEAN Member States)

	Current Impact of Self-Care	Future Impact of Self-Care
	\$31.4 billion of cost containment	\$50 billion of cost containment
	0.5 billion hours of physician time	0.8 billion hours of physician time
	3.1 billion hours saved on individual time for treatment	5.2 billion hours saved on individual time for treatment

Results of the study conducted by both KPMG and the GSCF validates that self-care delivers clear economic benefits on a global scale. Especially as societies pivot away from "curative care" towards adopting a "preventive care" approach to health management, the role of self-care becomes increasingly paramount.

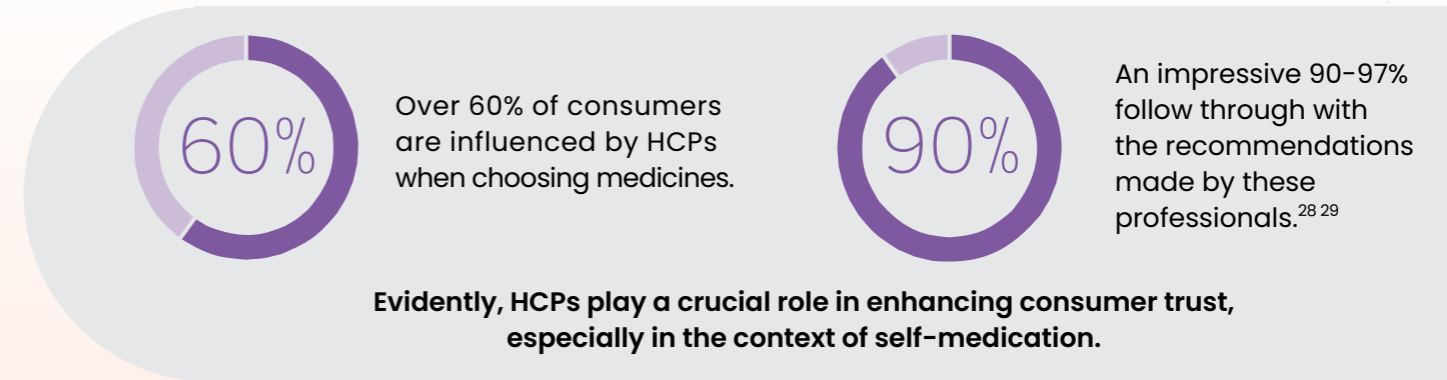
SELF-CARE: Delivering Benefits From Healthcare Practitioners to Patients

In addition to the economic contributions, self-care also complements the role of healthcare practitioners (HCPs), unlocking further benefits along the healthcare continuum.

For a start, self-care enhances individual health empowerment and health literacy, and promotes the efficient use of limited healthcare resources to ultimately relieve the burden on healthcare providers.

Embedding health and self-care literacy into professional education, furthering professional development, as well as integrating self-care into workforce accreditation standards, is important. This involves the deployment of multi-disciplinary teams, and HCPs play a critical role in this area.

In fact, global research indicates that:



In Southeast Asia, pharmacies serve as the primary point of care for patients, surpassing doctor visits by a factor of 10.³⁰ To improve health literacy among pharmacists, Opella. collaborated with SwipeRx to create PharmAcademy.

This platform offers CPD-accredited disease education modules, soft skills training, and convenient access to product information for pharmacists and pharmacies in Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia. For Indonesia, it also includes e-commerce feature allowing easy access to Sanofi products to pharmacists.

Since its launch, the partnership has significantly increased access to health literacy information and medicines, particularly benefiting small to medium-sized pharmacies that are typically harder to reach.



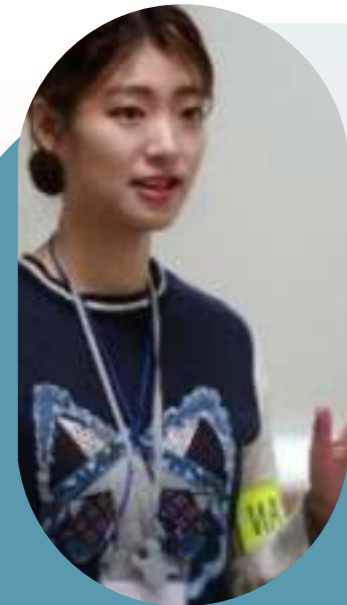
Going further, Opella. have partnered with Docquity to launch Sanofi Masterclass, supporting the health literacy journey of doctors and specialists in Philippines and Vietnam.

Through these digital innovations, Sanofi CHC has conducted educational sessions, and have trained over 11,000 doctors and pharmacists to date.

ENDORISING SELF-CARE

Trust-building and education programmes are essential components of effective healthcare delivery. Initiatives like the ones driven by the industry can empower HCPs with credible and trust health literacy information to make a positive impact on patient outcome.

To create positive outcomes for patients, HCPs must be part of the conversation to steer change and encourage the adoption of self-care practices across the healthcare continuum, especially as AMS are in the trajectory towards an ageing society.



Yoonjung Choi

Policy Coordinator & Consultant at Korean Office for Government Policy Coordination

“Demand for self-care keeps rising in the ageing society. Raising public health literacy with healthcare professionals would navigate sustainable healthcare system, saving more lives.”



Prof. Dr. apt. Zullies Ikawati

Professor at Faculty of Pharmacy Universitas Gadjah Mada

“Pharmacists play a crucial role in self-care by acting as accessible healthcare providers who offer personalized medication management, health education, and preventive services. Their expertise helps bridge gaps in health literacy, medication adherence, and chronic disease management. By providing guidance on lifestyle modifications, conducting health screenings, and promoting vaccination, pharmacists empower individuals to take proactive steps towards maintaining and improving their health, ultimately contributing to a healthier community. Their multifaceted role makes them pivotal in bridging gaps in the healthcare system and enhancing the quality of care for all.”



Dr. Yolanda R. Robles, RPh, PhD

Professor, University of the Philippines Manila
President, Federation of Asian Pharmaceutical Associations

“Part of the pharmacist’s global role is to promote responsible self-care. We encourage appropriate medicine use and the adoption of healthy lifestyles. By providing individualized patient education and advice on medication-taking and healthy choices, the pharmacists support self-care and envision better health literacy, adherence to health regimens, improved health outcomes and enhanced quality of life among the populations.”



Dr. Nguyen Khanh Phuong

Director of Health Strategy and Policy Institute under Ministry of Health

“Self-care plays a crucial role in strengthening healthcare systems. It empowers individuals, families, and communities to manage their health and well-being. By promoting self-care, we can improve primary healthcare and contribute to achieving universal health coverage. Given the context in Vietnam with an increasing burden of chronic NCDs making up about 75% of total burden of disease, the self-care becomes more crucial in managing these chronic conditions at community level. Integrating self-care into primary health care policies is essential for promoting patient empowerment and improving health outcomes.”



LEE Yeong Yeh, MD, PhD

Professor of Medicine and Consultant of Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Internal Medicine
Universiti Sains Malaysia

“To create and advance a sustainable self-care ecosystem in Malaysia will not only benefit the population health but also lessen the economic burden of our entire healthcare system. In my gastroenterology practice, self-care is an important component of clinical management, because it helps to empower my patients to make better decisions together.”



Dr. Manuel Dayrit

Professor at the Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health; former Secretary of Health; Self-Care Study author

“Self-care is essential to achieve the goals of Universal Health Care in the Philippines. Self-care and health literacy go together. Health literacy is the ability of individuals to access, understand, and use information to inform health-related decisions. To strengthen health literacy among Filipinos towards better self-care, visionary leadership, effective policies, and intersectoral action should blaze a trail forward.”

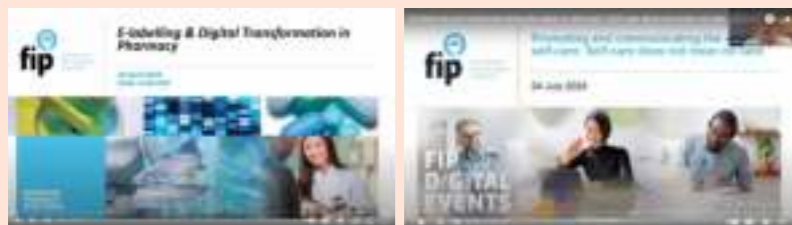
EU-ABC MEMBERS' WORK WITH INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL FEDERATION (FIP)



Founded in 1912, FIP is a non-governmental organisation with its head office in the Netherlands. Through their partnerships and extensive pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences network, we work to support the development of the pharmacy profession, through practice and emerging scientific innovations, and through developing the pharmacy workforce in order to meet the world's health care needs and expectations.

Opella.

Sanofi CHC has partnered with International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) focusing on advancing self-care and enhancing the role of pharmacists globally. This collaboration aligns with Sanofi CHC's mission to empower individuals to take charge of their health through accessible, science-based self-care solutions. Over the past year, Sanofi CHC has worked with FIP to explore the enablers and barriers to healthcare literacy, particularly examining how e-labeling can mitigate the effects of low healthcare literacy.



A recent FIP report, supported by Sanofi, underscores the need for regulation in e-labeling to ensure that no one is left behind as the digital transition accelerates. The report highlights the importance of collaboration among pharmaceutical companies, healthcare providers, and regulators to address digital exclusion and ensure all patients can access the information they need in formats they can use. Additionally, it notes that e-labeling offers significant benefits, particularly as global sustainability efforts seek to reduce paper consumption, and only 37% of people currently read Patient Information Leaflets (PILs) in medication packaging.

By integrating these insights, the partnership aims to support pharmacists in delivering better healthcare outcomes and to drive innovation in self-care, ultimately contributing to global health improvements.³²

EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS:

Reckitt's ASEAN Medical Education Resource Centre



Reckitt's online ASEAN Medical Education Resource Centre offers healthcare professionals free and easily accessible medical education on a wide range of health and nutrition topics. This portal is built on our commitment to providing well-researched, science-based resources and proven solutions to support healthcare professionals in delivering exceptional care to their patients and loved ones.

To date, this digital platform has reached over 12,000 healthcare professionals.



Reckitt is committed to elevating the role of pharmacists in providing reliable information on self-care and trusted health advice, empowering consumers and patients to proactively manage their health conditions.

In partnership with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), Reckitt organises educational resources focused on self-care, emphasising individual management in areas such as Digestive Health, Respiratory Health, Antimicrobial Resistance, Pain, and Sexual Health. FIP has developed several digital assets to promote self-care, including:



Six short (10-minute) videos on behaviour change in self-care



A multi-speaker digital event titled "Promoting and Communicating the Value of Self-Care: Self-Care Does Not Mean No Care"



A multi-speaker digital event discussing "Pharmacists' Role in Supporting Health Behaviour Change"

BREAKING BARRIERS: Reckitt's Approach to Self-Care in Vietnam through Safe Sex Education



Reckitt champions open dialogues to identify and overcome barriers to self-care adoption through strategic public-private partnerships.

Vietnam faces public health challenges, ranking among the top five countries with the highest abortion rates and the top two ASEAN countries with the highest growth rate of HIV/AIDS. To tackle these issues, Reckitt owned Durex, a market leader in condoms and lubricants, partnered with the Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control, local publisher Vietcetera, NGO PATH, and social enterprise Glink. Together, they addressed sex-taboo topics and transformed "safe sex education" into provocative edutainment through:

Social Media Campaigns:

Healthcare professionals (HCPs) and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) shared insights on safe sex through the "Coimo" podcast on Vietcetera. Over the past three years, this initiative has garnered 5.2 million views on YouTube and over 100 million views on Facebook and TikTok.

Unitour – Safe Sex Talks

Conducted over the past four years, these talks have reached more than 80 schools and 40,000+ university, college, and high school students, promoting safe sex education across Vietnam.

UNDERUTILISATION OF SELF-CARE

Self-care is not a new concept, but despite widespread consensus on its role in the healthcare continuum, it has not become as embedded in health systems as it should be.³⁰

The Council recognises the complementary nature of self-care and acknowledges its role in alleviating the burden of HCPs. Despite the proven economic gains and its value, self-care remains underutilised across the globe, and “remains a hidden, underfunded and underpromoted force in our healthcare systems”.³¹

To shine the spotlight on self-care and realise its benefits for healthcare systems and practitioners, key recommendations by the Council are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION

1 Establish an enabling environment to promote self-care and health literacy across ASEAN

- Implement educational campaigns to empower consumers and encourage responsible self-medication
- Facilitate open dialogues to identify and overcome existing barriers to self-care adoption
- Support research initiatives to gather evidence for policy development and decision-making in self-care promotion
- Elevate the roles of pharmacist in providing reliable information on selfcare and trusted health advice so consumers and patients empowering their selfcare or active self-treatment to manage chronic conditions

RECOMMENDATION

2 Improve processes to maximise opportunities & broaden access

- Advocate for re-classification or switching of prescription medications to over-the-counter status to broaden patient access based on risk profile and international guidance
- Simplify registration processes and streamline advertising/promotional approvals to expedite the availability of self-care options for consumers
- Promote ASEAN region-wide classification for switching from prescription (Rx) to Over-The-Counter (OTC) medication

RECOMMENDATION

3 Leverage on digitalisation & digital solutions to make health-care more accessible for consumers & HCPs

- Encourage the implementation of e-labelling initiatives to provide consumers with accessible and personalised information on healthcare products
- Support the development and adoption of e-pharmacies and e-commerce to improve access to medications and healthcare products
- Promote the use of digital devices, apps, and software to facilitate self-monitoring, health management, and access to healthcare resources and information
- Promote the use of track-and-trace systems to facilitate real-time updates of product information and ensure product authenticity and in turn, safeguard patient's safety



RECOMMENDATION 1

Establishing a safe & enabling environment to promote self-care and health literacy across ASEAN

FINDING THE PERFECT EQUATION FOR SELF-CARE?



The WHO conceptualised a total of 12 elements that make up an enabling environment for self-care.



The GSCF highlighted four broad pillars needed to realise the full potential of self-care within a given health system.³⁶



The EU-ABC identifies that the integration of self-care into healthcare systems needs to be viewed as a mutually reinforcing model that integrates both concepts above. The ideal? A model that reinforces close collaboration between consumers, industry and policymakers, to reinforce and emphasise the importance of self-care for its adoption.

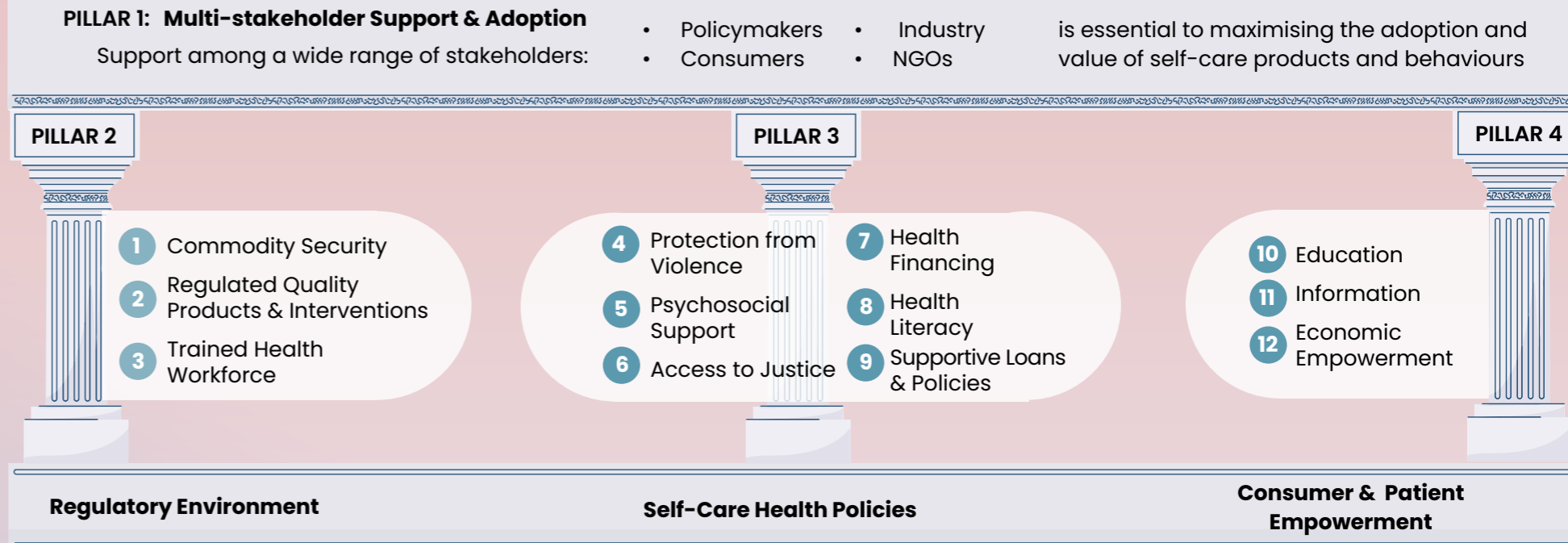
Self-care is the power of individuals to prevent, manage and treat self-diagnosable diseases themselves, in the context of a safe and supportive enabling environment. It does not replace the existing health care system, but instead **provides additional choices and options for health care for individuals.**

Is ASEAN in possession of an environment that actively promotes self-care? Unfortunately, no.

Based on the report by the Global Self-Care Federation, Thailand & Indonesia – two ASEAN member states of the twenty countries covered across the two reports that was surveyed – recorded a self-care readiness level of only 2.73 out of a total of 4.0 while Singapore recorded a self-care readiness level of 3.16 out of 4.³³

Even with a health literacy rate of 48.7% – higher than Singapore – for Thailand, it fared lower in terms self-care readiness. Why is this so? Because self-care health literacy forms only one element within the enabling environment of self-care.^{34 35}

AT A GLANCE: Enabling Environment for Self-Care



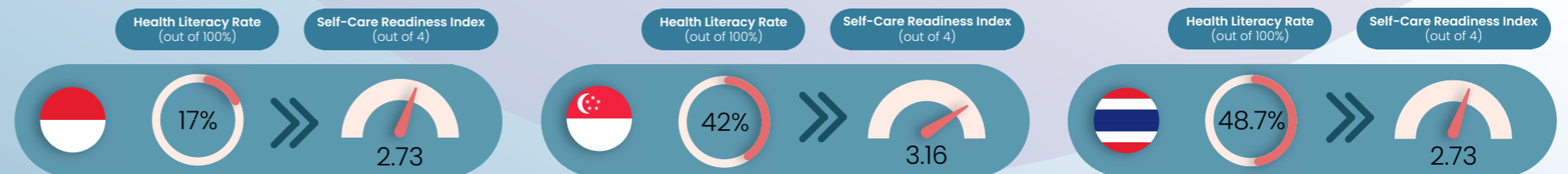
Regulatory Environment
Regulations determine the ability of the self-care industry to drive innovation, empower consumers, and realise the value of its medicinal, non-medicinal, nutritive, and device products for the health system.

Self-Care Health Policies
Health policy is influenced by policymakers' perceptions and decisions related to self-care, including recognition of self-care products' and practices' economic value, and policies to promote self-care as an affordable health solution.

Consumer & Patient Empowerment
Self-care products and practices deliver the greatest value when consumers and patients are empowered to understand their health, make their own health decisions, and use self-care products confidently.

Visibly, due to the cross-cutting nature of all twelve elements identified by WHO, approaches designed to develop the enabling environment of self-care cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, the EU-ABC proposes the following pragmatic recommendations which are all-encompassing to address the four broad pillars conceptualised by GSCF:

- Implement simple and easy to understand educational campaigns to empower consumers and HCPs to encourage responsible self-medication and self-care.
- Facilitate open dialogues to identify and overcome existing barriers to self-care adoption.
- Support research initiatives to gather evidence for policy development and decision-making in self-care promotion.



The Council captures the recommendations in the table below and provides brief an elaboration for each, for consideration

1

Implement educational campaigns to empower consumers, pharmacists, & HCPs to encourage responsible self-medication & self-care

Developing Health Policies & Infrastructure to Enable Self-Care

Educational Campaigns

- Availing Information Materials to Consumers
- Develop Public Awareness Campaigns
- Provide Training for Healthcare Providers
- Develop School-Based Programmes or incorporate self-care as part of school curricula to encourage adoption of self-care practices early
- Acknowledging and elevating the role of pharmacists in creating an enabling self-care environment

Introducing Self-Care to Underserved Areas

- Invest in healthcare facilities, especially rural and underserved areas to enable equitable access to medication and treatment

Creating a Regulatory Environment to Advance Self-Care

- Maintain Mandatory but simple Labelling Requirements to Ensure Safe Consumption or Application of Drugs
- Foster Collaboration between Regulatory Agencies and Healthcare Professionals to Develop and Disseminate Educational Campaigns on Self-care and Responsible Self-Medication

Strengthen workforce that caters to grassroots & introduce self-care practices in rural areas

- Provide continuous training and subsidisation for education and upskilling of Community Healthcare Workers
- Leverage on the merits of self-care practices & develop retention strategies for healthcare workers and practitioners to avoid exodus of local healthcare workers

Empower Consumer & Patients to Practice Self-Care

- Actively seek out reliable sources of information on self-care and medication use
- Active Participation in Treatment Plans for Patients Self-Medicating to Manage Chronic Conditions
- Encourage the public to adopt the use of telemedicine

2

Facilitate open dialogues to identify and overcome existing barriers to self-care adoption by HCP-led projects, especially pharmacists as first points of contact in areas with restricted primary care access

Engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, ranging from:

- healthcare professionals
- pharmacists
- patient advocacy groups
- community organisations, and
- industry representatives

to gather insights on addressing the barriers to self-care adoption & solicit feedback from multi-stakeholders to battle myths and misconceptions, as well as respond to the evolving needs and priorities of patients.

3

Support research initiatives to gather evidence for policy development and decision-making in self-care promotion

By assessing public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to self-care, regulatory bodies can identify trends, patterns, and disparities in self-care usage. This data enables policymakers to tailor policy interventions, accordingly, identifying areas where additional support or interventions are needed to promote self-care practices effectively.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Improving processes to maximise opportunities & broaden access



IMPORTANCE OF SELF-MEDICATION

Self-medication is an important component of responsible self-care and accessibility to over-the-counter (OTC) and general sales list (GSL) medicines form a critical part of that.



The Council believes that the following merits warrants prompt action to transform prescription drugs (Rx) to OTC:

1

Increases patient access to medication for treatment of common ailments and minor health conditions

2

Generates cost savings for the purchase of medication without the need for consultation

3

Contributes to improved public health outcomes by promoting early intervention and preventive care

4

Encourages the adoption of self-care practices and reduces burden on healthcare systems through early intervention

While increased Rx to OTC switching is an important means of promoting better self-care, there is, unfortunately, still a lack of common regulatory classification for medicines across ASEAN. For one, the Pharmaceutical Products Working Group (PPWG) under the ASEAN Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) has only made very limited progress on harmonising standards.

The minute progress is despite commitments made in 2022 to “to support a reduction of technical barriers to trade in the pharmaceutical products” and “to provide improved access to pharmaceutical products”.³⁸

A general region-wide classification for switching from Rx to OTC medication is still yet to be seen, and neither is there a fully harmonised approach for the approval of medicines.

Captured in the illustration below, the regulations for Rx to OTC varies for each ASEAN Member States (AMS).

While the designation of a “gold standard” can be contentious, the Council identifies “good buys” that can increase patient access to medication for early intervention and treatment of health conditions:

1 Remove disproportionate regulatory barriers and maximise opportunities for mutual recognition, notification and self-certification across AMS

2 Advocate for re-classification or switching of prescription medications to over-the-counter status to broaden patient access

3 Develop a clear drug classification regime with transparent methodology for medicines to move through various categories from prescription only to OTC (e.g.. Thailand)

4 Simplify registration processes and streamlining advertising or promotional approvals to expedite the availability of self-care options for consumers (e.g. Singapore)

Rx to OTC Developments across ASEAN

COUNTRY	2022	2024
Thailand	“Thai Food and Drug Administration established a guideline, requirement and evaluation process for switching from Rx to OTC or GSL using a risk-based approach in 2016.”	“Open-Shelf Drug Category OPS drugs can be sold in type 2 drugstores operated by certified non-pharmacists. General Sale List Drug Category Drugs for self-medication can be sold in non-pharmacy retailers and over the internet.”
Vietnam	In 2017: Government issued a circular where Article 2 covers the rules for compiling list of OTC drugs and criteria for selection of OTC drugs. In 2022: Government has issued General Sales List that allows for the sale of 28 active ingredients in stores other than pharmacies.	A revised version of the Law on Pharmaceuticals 2016 will be presented to the National Assembly for discussion and feedback during a legislative meeting from June 17 to 28. The new Law allows continued use of expired drug registration licences if renewal applications have been submitted until renewal or the Ministry of Health’s notification is received. This aims to ensure uninterrupted pharmaceutical circulation and prevent supply disruptions.
Malaysia	A simple form guidance is available from the Poison Board, Pharmaceutical Services Programme, Ministry of Health of Malaysia.	
Indonesia		Ministry of Health currently drafting the new guidance and mechanism of switching process under the Ministry.
Philippines	Food & Drug Administration has initiated the Review of Over-The-Counter applications (ROTCA). The registration requirements were streamlined and the registration lead time was reduced for Over the Counter and Household Remedy (GSL) products.	
Singapore		Product specific switch from Rx to Pharmacy only or General Sales can be submitted directly by the product license holder to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA). Recognised professional bodies can also make recommendations for down scheduling of pure prescription API for consideration for HSA to allow exemption limited supply by Pharmacists without prescription.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Leverage on digitalisation and digital solutions to make healthcare more accessible for consumers and HCPs

To enhance accessibility to healthcare services, leveraging digitalisation is paramount. Initiatives such as e-labelling can provide consumers with accessible information on healthcare products, ensuring informed decision-making. Supporting the development and adoption of e-pharmacies and wider e-commerce channels also vital in improving access to medications and healthcare products, particularly for remote

or underserved areas. Additionally, promoting the use of digital devices, apps, and software will also facilitate self-monitoring, health management, and access to healthcare resources and information.

Consolidating the merits of digitalisation on healthcare, the Council proposes for the following:

- A** Encourage the shift and implementation of e-labelling initiatives to provide consumers with accessible real time information on healthcare products; multilingual support, improved readability, visual demonstrations, inclusivity and personalised content.
- B** Support the development and adoption of e-pharmacies and wider ecommerce channels to improve access to self-care medications and healthcare products.
- C** Promote the use of digital devices, apps, and software to facilitate self-monitoring, health management, and access to healthcare resources and information.
- D** Promote the use of track-and-trace systems to facilitate real-time updates of product information and ensure product authenticity and in turn, safeguard patient's safety.

7 E-LABELLING INITIATIVES

Digitisation of labels is gaining traction globally with countries like Brazil, the European Union (EU), Japan and Singapore rolling out trials to transition from paper to e-labelling for labels and patient information leaflets (PILs) on drugs and medical devices given its manifold merits for multiple stakeholders – from manufacturers, regulators, and down to consumers.

A recent study by IPSOS conducted in 6 EU member states, highlighted that the transition to a fully digital product information system signifying a positive transformation for EU healthcare.

Collaborative efforts, legislative revisions, and pilot projects demonstrate commitment to harmonisation and improved communication. The Association of the European Self-Care Industry (AESGP), concluded that to ensure a smooth transition, a parallel Patient Education & Digital Literacy campaign is recommended, aligning with the increasing prevalence of internet access and digital literacy. This unified vision aims to create a connected, accessible, and patient-centric future for healthcare information in the EU.⁴⁰

Transforming Patient Information Leaflets to E-Labelling in Singapore

2019



Health Sciences Authority (HSA) introduced an initiative enabling the electronic distribution of package inserts and patient information leaflets (PILs).⁴¹

Under the initiative, the sponsor must place a machine-readable code (e.g., QR code) or website URL on the product packaging linking to a secure online system that publishes the package insert and PIL in a digital format (i.e., e-labels) instead of attaching the printed hard copy of the information inside the physical packs of the product.⁴²

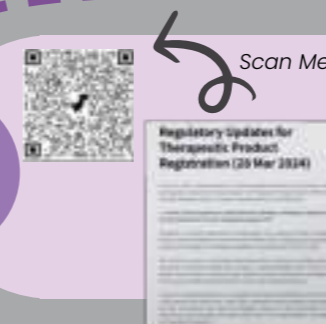
HSA published final guidance on the e-labelling of therapeutic products. Singapore defines e-labelling as the digital version of the existing package insert and/or PIL that is currently distributed by sponsors in printed copies contained in the physical packs of the medicines. Under the guidance, the HSA will facilitate the implementation of e-labelling for prescription-only medicines.

The guidance states that the sponsor, with a secure online system, can distribute the HSA-approved package insert and/or PIL in the form of an e-package insert and/or PIL, which may be distributed with or without physical printed copies as part of the registered product.

2021



2024



HSA published guidance to launch its pilot programme to extend Electronic labelling (e-labelling) to pharmacy only (P) and General Sale List (GSL) therapeutic products (TP) with effect from 1 April 2024.

Increase in Adoption Rates

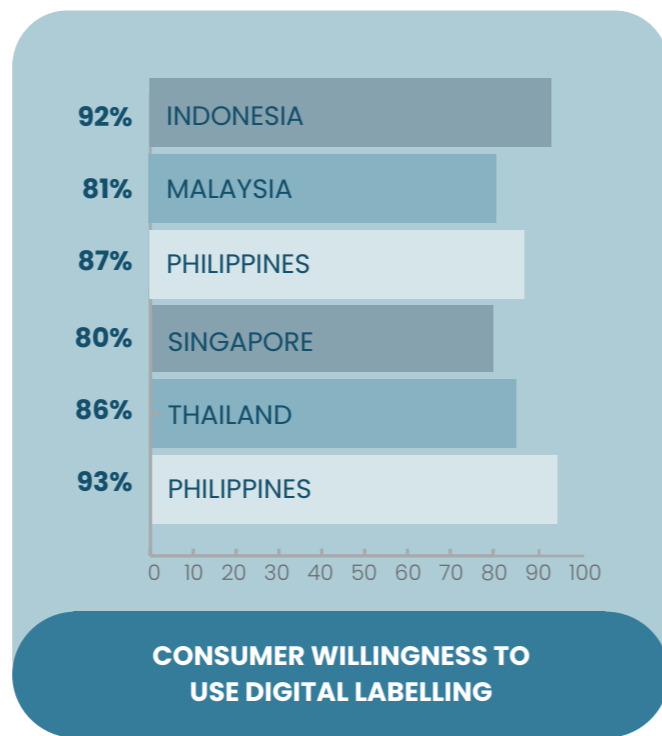
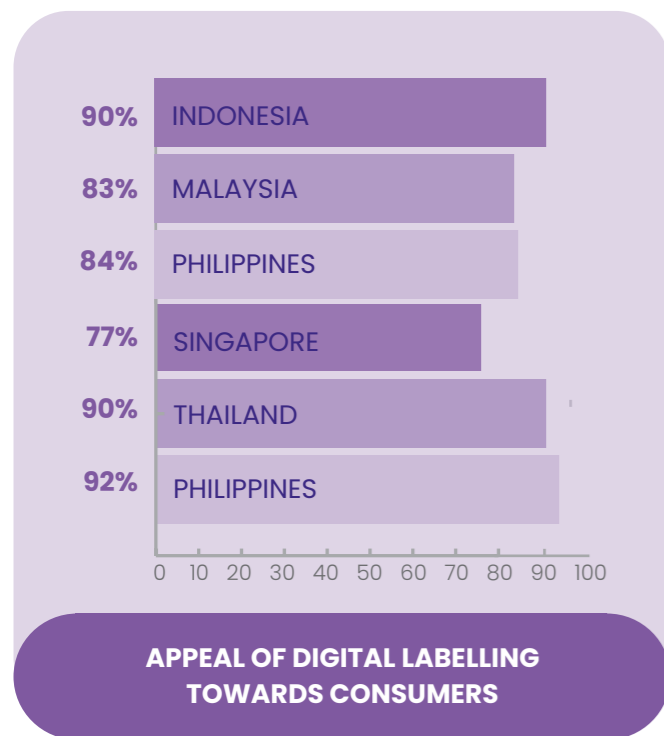
Digital labelling has been increasingly prevalent in Southeast Asia, with an 83% increase in the use of QR codes observed between 2014 and 2018. Additionally, COVID-19 has accelerated the use of QR codes, with data collected from the Food Industry Asia (FIA) survey in 2022 affirmed the consumer sentiments that physical labels are lacking in terms of providing easy-to-read and simplified information on products.⁴³

Pushing for Digital



In another report published by the Council in 2024, the EU-ABC has stressed for the need to adopt a digitalised labelling system for food and beverage products. The same can be adopted for packaging and instructions for drugs and medical devices.

ADOPT QR: Strong Consumer Sentiments across ASEAN



MERITS OF E-LABELLING

1

Overcoming Physical Limitations on Packaging & PILs Providing Comprehensive Product Information in various languages

E-labelling plays a significant role in providing patient-centred care by tailoring information and resources to needs and preferences of individual patients. It allows patients to access information in a preferred language and format, such as text, audio, or video, making patient information accessible to different audiences. Therefore, patients with different learning preferences, disabilities, or literacy levels can all access the information in the way they prefer. It also ensures consistent access to information as opposed to a PIL that could be lost or misplaced.

2

Enhancing Consumer Empowerment Accurate and up-to-date information on ingredients, nutrition, and allergens and beyond the package label such as the instructions of use, disposal instructions, and recipes provided from brands can be found on the webpage link.

Consumers are connected with product data and these information can be easily accessed by simply scanning the QR code found on product packages using a phone's camera or any QR code reader to access the web-based product page and validate authenticity of product for safe usage or consumption.

3

Assisting on Regulatory Compliance Product will contain global ID which can be connected to authoritative and trusted data

Indonesia have introduced digital labelling systems, for example, in some of the food regulations, allowing digital labelling systems to present information about the product safety and manufacturers, for instance, registration number and address. Standards around digital labelling for general products was also developed by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

In addition to the benefits above, one additional values of e-labelling is its positive impact on the environment. E-labelling eliminates the need for the pharmaceutical industry to PILs often packaged with medicines. Reducing the demand for paper, ink, electricity and other resources associated with printing can significantly reduce the impact of the pharmaceutical industry on the environment. In addition, e-labelling eliminates the need for the shipping and physical distribution of PILs, reducing the carbon footprint associated with them. Over the long term, e-labelling can lead to lower economic expenditure for pharmaceutical companies and healthcare facilities by reducing the need for printing,

packaging and distributing traditional PILs.⁴⁵ In summary, digital labels bring greater flexibility and cost-efficiency in changing labels as there is the reduced need to reprint new labels as information can be edited digitally without incurring high costs. QR codes also enable manufacturers to update nutritional and safety information without needing to redesign packaging. This ensures that consumers always have access to the most accurate data without the generating additional waste on packages. Aside, it provides a convenient way for consumers to access detailed information about products using their smartphones. This accessibility can empower consumers to make more informed decisions about their choices.

LEVERAGING ON DIGITAL LABELLING TO ENSURE HEALTH DELIVERY FOR ALL

Leveraging digital labels is an innovative approach to ensuring inclusive health delivery for all, including those who are visually impaired. By integrating accessible technologies such as QR codes, digital labels can provide vital product information in audible formats, making it easier for visually impaired individuals to access and understand. This technological advancement not only helps eliminate barriers to healthcare but also empowers visually impaired individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Moreover, digital labels promote greater accuracy in product usage and enhance safety by providing clear and accessible instructions. Embracing such digital solutions is a crucial step towards achieving equitable healthcare delivery and ensuring that no one is left behind.⁴⁶

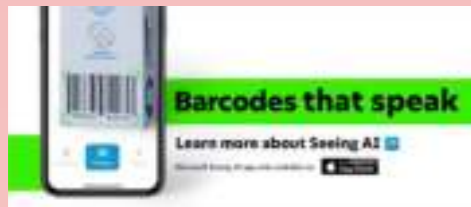


Accessible QR Code Bayer Consumer Health & Zappar⁴⁷

Improving access to self-care and health information for blind and partially sighted individuals is of immense importance. Independence and choice are fundamental rights, particularly when it comes to personal health management. With over two million people in the UK currently living with sight loss, a number set to double to over four million by 2050, the need for accessible health information is urgent.

Bayer and Zappar have taken a significant step in addressing this need by collaborating to make packaging information available to blind and partially sighted consumers through Zap Vision technology. Such innovation is crucial as it empowers visually impaired individuals to make informed decisions about their health, fostering greater autonomy and safety. Moreover, it sets a benchmark for other major brands, encouraging them to adopt similar inclusive practices. The collaboration between Bayer and Zappar exemplifies the impact of technology in bridging accessibility gaps, highlighting the importance of innovation in ensuring equitable healthcare for all.⁴⁸

Seeing AI Application
Haleon



Making product information accessible for individuals who are blind or visually impaired is a crucial step towards inclusivity. Recognising this need, a collaboration between Haleon and Microsoft aims to bridge this gap. Millions of people globally face challenges in accessing product information due to blindness, visual impairment, or difficulties in reading, which can lead to errors in purchasing or using products.

To address these issues, Microsoft has expanded the functionality of its Seeing AI app, a free application designed to narrate the world for the visually impaired community. This innovative app now includes features that make product information audible, allowing users to easily access and understand the details they need.

By partnering with Microsoft to enhance the Seeing AI app, Haleon strives to ensure that everyone, regardless of their visual abilities, can make informed decisions about the products they use. Haleon provides detailed on pack information to Microsoft for over 1500 products across the USA and the UK, ultimately promoting better everyday health and accessibility for all.

HALEON

The Council advocates for the adoption of QR codes on Back of Package Labelling (BoPL) to ensure harmonisation across ASEAN Markets. We highlighting additional benefits of QR as follows:

- Comply with national standards across ASEAN Member States
- Enhance speed of compliance
- Overcome language barriers



eZTracker⁵⁰
Zuellig Pharma



The eZTracker is the first blockchain-based application in Asia, launched by Zuellig Pharma since 2020.

This digital label allows patients to: trace the origins of products and authenticity by scanning a code on the packaging; and address the growing challenge of counterfeit health products in the local healthcare and aesthetics industry.⁵¹

With eZTracker, Zuellig Pharma and medicine manufacturers are immediately notified if an unregistered product is detected, allowing this to be brought up with the relevant authorities.

This app is currently available in Malaysia, Brunei, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand, with over 6 million products on the blockchain and more than 60,000 users consisting of patients and doctors verifying the authenticity of their medicines.

In 2022, eZTracker tracked 19 million worth of suspected counterfeits and diversions with 208,000 scans of suspected counterfeits and diversions.⁵² Further, deployment of the eZTracker application has allowed Zuellig Pharma to generate 350,000 e-label codes in 2023 alone, empowering pharma manufacturers to seamlessly update product leaflets digitally.

In addition to battling counterfeit, these initiatives have also reduced the reliance of paper by pharma companies, and minimised storage requirements and carbon emissions associated with transporting paper records.



Creating Digital IDs



Activate Traceability

2 DIGITAL APPLICATIONS: HEALTH AT YOUR HANDS

The onset of COVID-19 accelerated the expansion of e-pharmacies and telemedicine adoption by health start-ups as means to overcome the need for physical consult between patients and doctors. Apart from containing the spread of diseases, virtual health solutions provides consumers with an alternative means to tackle rising medical inflation and inadequate health infrastructure.

AI & Health

Agnos Health is a health tech startup established in Thailand that was borne out of the pandemic to overcome:

- the high patient to low doctor ratio
- the lack of access to health services in Thailand.⁵³



Agnos Health leverages on technology to make it easier and more economical for Thais to receive health services whenever they need.



The platform analyses user health through Artificial Intelligence so that the app can suggest to patients if they need to visit doctors for their condition.



If conditions can be managed at home, patients will be redirected to visit a pharmacy for self-medication and treatment.



If further diagnosis is needed, only then will patients then be redirected to hospitals. This model will avail hospital resources to focus on treatment for patients who truly need them.

Wearable Technology

Apart from AI, wearable technology also provides opportunities for individuals to gain access to their health. It also aids in health monitoring and management for users by providing patient-centered health data in real time, which can help inform self-management decision-making.^{54,55}

Wearables aid in monitoring vital signs such as heart rate, and collects information such as heart function, blood oxygen levels, blood glucose concentration, and blood pressure. These devices are usually paired with

mobile apps to log and maintain records for users to present to healthcare providers upon medical follow-up. This information allows doctors to detect increased risks and offer advice before an emergency arises. If integrated with Artificial Intelligence (AI), wearables are poised to be given more functionality and improve performance for users by leveraging the data collected to provide more accurate diagnosis and assistance for long-term chronic disease management, and to help patients forecast a medical emergency before it happens.

1 Rise in Popularity

Rise in popularity in recent years with devices like fitness trackers and smartwatches being used to monitor vital signs, health status, and activity levels.

2 Goal-Setting

Encourage healthier behaviour by helping users set health goals tailored to the user and incentivise healthy behaviours (i.e. Healthy365 App by Health Promotion Board in Singapore).

3 Early Detection

Drive early disease detection and intervention and higher patient engagement, enable doctors to develop personalised treatment plans, and support remote monitoring and care.

E-PHARMACIES ACROSS ASEAN

Amidst a changing healthcare landscape, e-pharmacies and digital health provide consumers with convenient access to medications, healthcare products, and telemedicine services through online platforms and mobile applications. The services offered by e-pharmacies have seen its proliferation across ASEAN member states in recent years.

THAILAND⁶³

Ministry of Public Health launched the eHealth Strategy (2017 – 2026) to enable swift digital technology adoption and improve healthcare system in view of a rapidly ageing population. The regulation to allow drug delivery under telepharmacy is still pending.

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 Agnos Health, Wongnai, Capsuile Thailand, Doctor Raksa, ReliefNow, PharmCare, Telepharmacy Marketplace Extra 7-11 DrugStor

MALAYSIA^{59 60}

E-pharmacy mobile application launched in 2024 to allow e-prescriptions via teleconsultation for pharmacists and walk-in patients to help pharmacists dispense essential medication and pharmaceutical services to rural and underserved communities.

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 Caring Pharmacy Online, DoctorOnCall, Farmasi Alpro, Teleme Technologies, Doctor2U, Doc2Us

SINGAPORE⁶²

First HSA-registered e-pharmacy was launched in Singapore in 2022.

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 Doctor Anywhere, Hyphens Pharma, MyDoc, WellAway

VIETNAM⁶⁴

Variety of digital applications and e-pharmacy are available. There is a clear focus on working within the traditional healthcare model rather than disrupting it, their aim is to manage outpatient care, thus lowering the traffic in overcrowded local hospitals.

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 Medigo, E-pharma: Pharmacy, Long Chau, An Khang, E-Commerce for Pharmacies: Thuocsi.vn, Online Healthcare Service App: Jio Health

PHILIPPINES⁶¹

Online pharmacies regulation, “eBotika Act” pushed in the Philippines to ensure safe operation of online pharmacies and encourage responsible consumption of drugs and medicines.

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 MedGrocer, MedExpress

INDONESIA^{57 58}

- The healthcare sector has deregulated to allow 100% foreign direct investments in some areas.
- Telemedicine industry is one of the fastest-growing sector in Indonesia
- E-pharmacy players make up 3% of pharmaceutical sector

Notable Virtual Health Solutions
 Alodokter, GoMed (under Gojek), Halodoc

To wrap up the recommendations in this section, leveraging on digital tools available – e-labelling, e-pharmacies, AI, wearables and other apps – will not only empower consumers to take ownership of their health at the convenience of their fingertips, but it also enables healthcare to be more efficient and convenient for all.

As with the principle of self-care, digital health solutions do not replace traditional healthcare models. Rather, it complements the existing healthcare infrastructure to help stakeholders along the healthcare continuum:^{65 66}

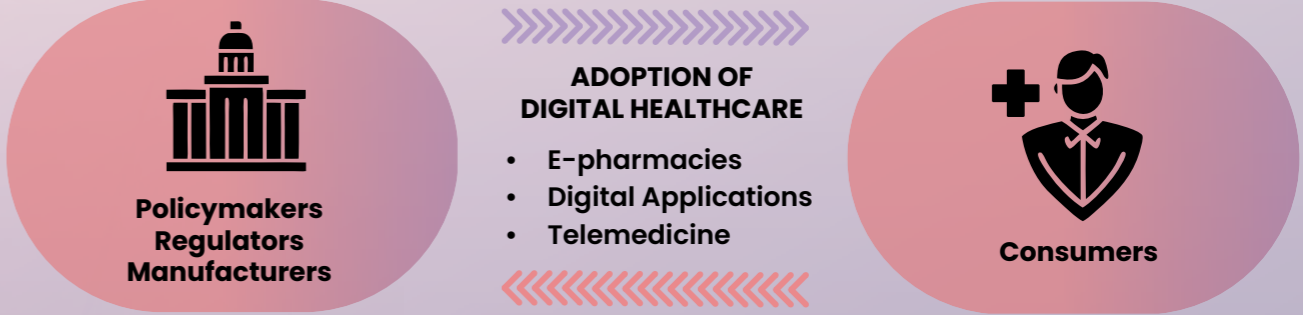
- 1 Bridge Gaps in Healthcare Access
- 2 Enhance Accessibility to Healthcare & Ensure Widespread Adoption
- 3 Reaffirm that Investment in Health Literacy Strategies is Critical for Disease Prevention & Management as well as Improving Population Health
- 4 Maintain Affordability of Treatment for both Healthcare Providers & Patients; to ultimately
- 4 Improve Patient Outcomes



By embracing these changes, the potential of digital solutions can be harnessed to revolutionise healthcare delivery while prioritising patient safety and well-being.

A Safe & Enabling Environment for Self-Care

- Create an enabling & safe environment for adoption of digital health and regulatory facilitation
- Partner with start-ups to encourage innovation and ensure accessibility of services
- Roll out education campaigns to educate and raise awareness on suite of services and proper usage of digital health for early intervention
- Establish feedback channels to address consumer concerns



Healthier population & economically productive workforce

Economic gains and channelling of economic resources to improve healthcare systems

Reduced burden on HCPs to avail resources for treatment of diseases for patients who need them most

Verify legitimacy and regulatory compliance of e-pharmacies and digital health tools before making purchases or engaging services.

Cost-savings

Better health outcomes

Increased accessibility to healthcare

The concept of self-care is not foreign to ASEAN Member States (AMS). In fact, self-care forms a crucial building block under the ASEAN Health Clusters, namely for ASEAN Health Cluster One, and Health Cluster Three.



HELPING ASEAN TO ACHIEVE GOALS FROM...

HEALTH CLUSTER 1

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

HEALTH CLUSTER 3

STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEM AND ACCESS TO CARE

HEALTH CLUSTER 2

RESPONDING TO ALL HAZARDS & EMERGING THREATS

HEALTH CLUSTER 4

ENSURING FOOD SAFETY

Strengthen capability, capacity, and advocacy in...

- **addressing risk factors** and their related diseases, and
 - other relevant conditions affecting the health of the ASEAN people by promoting healthy lifestyles throughout the life course.
- health system development** in order to
- increase access to safe,
 - affordable,
 - quality, and
 - holistic care.

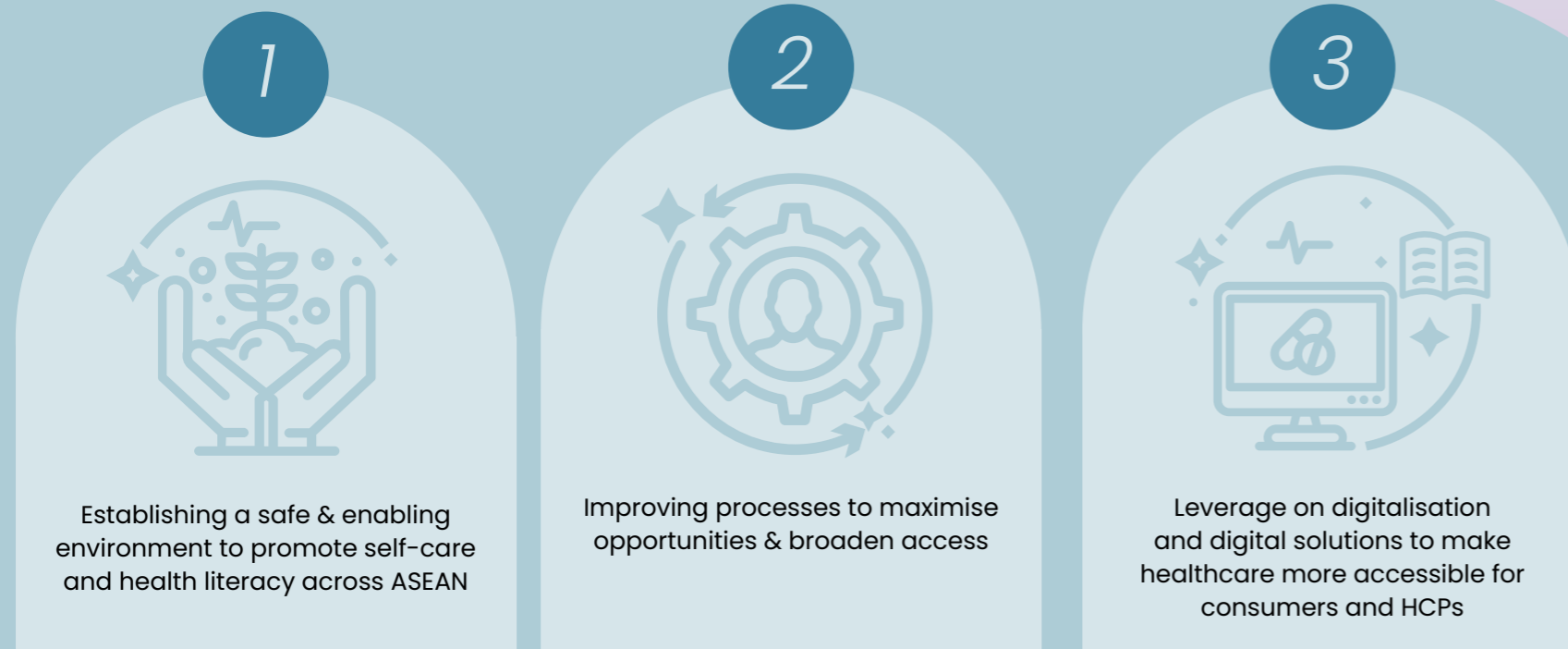


CONCLUSION

Moving forward, ASEAN will face new and re-emerging healthcare challenges such as increasing healthcare costs, increase in unhealthy habits and diets, insufficient or inadequate distribution of healthcare manpower and overloaded healthcare systems, lower doctor to patient ratio, ageing populations, an ongoing epidemiological transition characterised by increasing burdens of non-communicable diseases, and a persistent threat of infectious diseases.

While “self-care” is not explicitly mentioned in the ASEAN health clusters, the concept plays an important role in helping ASEAN achieve the health cluster goals. In other words, self-care is an integral component of the ASEAN Health Cluster, especially its role in promoting a healthy lifestyle, improving health outcomes, enhancing healthcare access and literacy, and strengthening the resiliency of healthcare systems across the region.

By embracing self-care and pushing for its adoption by the following recommendations covered in the paper, AMS can empower citizens to take ownership of their health and build resilient communities that are better equipped to address current and future health challenges.



The elevation of self-care from a well-practiced yet under-recognised concept to a cornerstone of healthcare systems is imperative. Its alignment with changing consumer behaviours, coupled with its potential to generate financial savings and prioritise resources, underscores its indispensability in fostering

sustainable healthcare practices. As we navigate the path towards greater recognition and implementation of self-care, it is essential to acknowledge the value of consumer healthcare products and leverage existing frameworks, such as encouraging the practice of traditional, to bolster its adoption.

SELF-CARE

- Acts as one of the key solutions for sustainable healthcare system
- Acknowledges and reaffirms the value of consumer healthcare products (i.e. OTC medicines, food supplements, and hygiene products) as essential components of self-care interventions
- Alleviates the problem of global manpower shortage in healthcare and the pressure on the primary healthcare systems.
- Complements the role of healthcare practitioners in diagnosis and treatment of diseases
- Is aligned with changing consumer behaviours
- Minimises the economic burdens and provides financial savings and resource prioritisation for global governments, especially given its flexibility to suit different healthcare finance schemes (Universal Healthcare, Out-of-Pocket expenses)

TO UNLOCK ITS MERIT

- Investment in credible health literacy and education solutions for consumers and HCPs is needed
- Requires a ‘whole-of-society’ approach, involving multi-stakeholder collaboration from the public sector, healthcare professionals, private sector, and consumers, to drive the policy development, ecosystem and readiness towards the achievement of self-care in a safe, and enabling environment

Through a concerted multi-stakeholder collaboration and with a collective commitment to policy development to create a safe and enabling ecosystem, self-care can be propelled to the forefront of healthcare innovation, enriching the well-being of individuals and communities across ASEAN and beyond.

About the EU-ASEAN Business Council

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) is the primary and sole voice for European business covering all of the ASEAN region. It is recognised by the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat and is an accredited entity under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter. Independent of both bodies, the Council has been established to help promote the interests of European businesses operating within ASEAN and to advocate for changes in policies and regulations which would help promote trade and investment between Europe and the ASEAN region.

The Council works on a sectorial and cross-industry basis to help improve the investment and trading conditions for European Businesses in the ASEAN region through influencing policy and decision makers throughout the region and in the EU, as well as acting as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas amongst its members and regional players within the ASEAN region.



The EU-ABC's membership consists of large European Multi-National Corporations and the nine European Chambers of Commerce from around Southeast Asia. The EU-ABC represents a diverse range of European industries cutting across almost every commercial sphere from car manufacturing through to financial services and including Fast Moving Consumer Goods and high-end electronics and communications. Our members all have a common interest in enhancing trade, commerce and investment between Europe and ASEAN.



To reflect our commitment towards self-care for the long haul, the Council has joined the United for Self-Care Coalition, a Coalition that was launched alongside the 76th World Health Assembly in June 2024.

The Coalition is a global group of like-minded organisations unified by one common goal: to achieve UHC through codifying recognition of the value of self-care within the WHO to spearhead the development of a WHO Resolution on Self-Care and/or inclusion of self-care as a meaningful component of progress. The Coalition will work collaboratively to raise awareness of the importance of self-care, promotes evidence-based interventions, and advocates for policies and strategies that support the integration of self-care as a core component of people-centred care and PHC. With like-minded partners from the Coalition, the Council is dedicated to advocating for the adoption of self-care, bringing the point of view of patients and consumers, health care professionals, academics and research, and the industry.



Self-Care Coalition at WHA76

On the occasion of the 76th World Health Assembly, the United for Self-Care Coalition hosted a side event highlighting the need to embed self-care into the healthcare continuum, particularly in the context of managing the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), strengthening primary health care (PHC) and advancing universal health coverage (UHC). The event brought together policymakers, healthcare providers, academics and patient advocates to discuss strategies for integrating self-care into national health systems and advancing health equity.

Speakers from a range of organizations provided a rich debate, including representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the Self-Care Trailblazer Group, Imperial College London Self-Care Academic Research Unit (SCARU) and the International Alliance of Patient Organisations (IAPO). Speakers highlighted the potential benefits of self-care, including improved health outcomes, increased access to healthcare services, stronger health systems and reduced healthcare costs.

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