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Regulating Malpractice in Telemedicine and Digital Health

George Benneh Mensah[1,2]

[1]Executive Director at Africa Institute For Regulatory Affairs LBG, Accra, Ghana

[2]Chief Researcher at EGRC Ghana Limited, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract

This paper employs the IRAC method to examine the legal and regulatory landscape governing malpractice in telemedicine and digital health in Ghana, focusing on patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, and leakage of sensitive patient information. Drawing upon relevant Ghanaian laws and regulations, as well as insights from relevant research papers, the analysis highlights the need for updates to existing legal frameworks, development of targeted AI governance mechanisms, and promotion of transparency and accountability in the use of digital health technologies. The paper provides practical recommendations for policymakers, healthcare stakeholders, and legal professionals, emphasizing the importance of public education and provider training to foster a culture of responsible innovation and maintain public trust in the rapidly evolving healthcare system. These findings contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and practices that prioritize patient safety, rights, and trust in the digital health era.

Keywords: Telemedicine, Digital health, Malpractice, Legal and regulatory framework, Ghana

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of telemedicine and digital health technologies has revolutionized healthcare delivery, offering numerous benefits such as improved access, cost-effectiveness, and patient convenience [1,2]. However, this digital transformation has also raised significant concerns regarding potential malpractice issues, particularly in the areas of patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, and the leakage of sensitive patient information to the public [3,45]. These issues pose substantial challenges for healthcare regulators, policymakers, and legal professionals, as they navigate the complex landscape of ensuring patient safety, maintaining public trust, and establishing effective governance frameworks in the digital age [18,32,47,48].

The importance of addressing malpractice issues in telemedicine and digital health cannot be overstated. As highlighted by Mensah et al. [3], the increasing reliance on electronic health records (EHRs) and AI-based systems in healthcare delivery has amplified the risk of patient privacy breaches, necessitating robust cybersecurity measures and data protection regulations. Furthermore, the rise of telemedicine and AI-based tools has raised questions about the standard of care and liability for healthcare professionals who rely on these technologies [5,9,49], emphasizing the need for clear guidelines and accountability mechanisms to prevent negligence and ensure patient safety.

Moreover, the leakage of sensitive patient information, such as vaccination records, can erode public trust in the healthcare system and deter individuals from seeking necessary care [11, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26]. This underscores the importance of developing secure data management practices and effective governance frameworks to safeguard patient confidentiality and maintain public confidence in digital health technologies.

To address these critical issues, this paper employs the IRAC (Issue, Rule, Analysis and Conclusion) method to systematically examine the legal and regulatory landscape governing malpractice in telemedicine and digital health in Ghana. By identifying the key issues, analyzing relevant laws and regulations, and providing evidence-based

recommendations, this paper aims to contribute to the development of effective policies and practices that promote responsible innovation, protect patient rights, and maintain public trust in the rapidly evolving healthcare system.

The policy relevance of this paper lies in its comprehensive analysis of the legal and regulatory challenges surrounding digital health and malpractice, and its practical recommendations for policymakers, healthcare stakeholders, and legal professionals. By highlighting the need for updates to existing legal frameworks, the development of targeted AI governance mechanisms, and the promotion of transparency and accountability in the use of digital health technologies [3,45], this paper provides valuable insights for policy formulation and implementation. Furthermore, the paper's emphasis on public education and provider training [20-24] underscores the importance of building a culture of responsible innovation and maintaining public trust in the healthcare system, which are critical considerations for policymakers in the digital age.

In summary, the increasing adoption of telemedicine and digital health technologies has brought to the fore the urgent need to address malpractice issues, including patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, and the leakage of sensitive patient information. This paper's use of the IRAC method to analyze the legal and regulatory landscape in Ghana and provide evidence-based recommendations makes it a valuable resource for policymakers, healthcare stakeholders, and legal professionals seeking to navigate the complex challenges of the digital health era and develop effective policies and practices that prioritize patient safety, rights, and trust.

Analytical Method

The IRAC (Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion) method is a widely used approach in legal analysis and writing, providing a structured framework for examining legal issues, relevant laws, and their application to specific facts. In this paper, the IRAC method was employed to analyze the legal and regulatory landscape governing malpractice in telemedicine and digital health in Ghana, focusing on patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, leakage of sensitive patient information, and overall regulation of digital health technologies.

The use of the IRAC method allowed for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the complex legal and regulatory issues. The paper identified key issues, examined relevant Ghanaian laws and regulations, and applied these rules to the specific issues raised, drawing upon the findings and arguments from relevant research papers. The conclusion section synthesized key findings and developed practical recommendations for addressing the identified issues, grounded in the analysis of the legal and regulatory landscape.

The following research papers demonstrate the effectiveness of the IRAC method in examining legal and regulatory issues related to digital health and malpractice. For example, Mensah et al. [14] employed the IRAC framework to assess the admissibility of AI-generated evidence in medical negligence cases under the Evidence Act, 1975 (NRCD 323), while Mensah et al. [45] utilized the IRAC approach to argue for the development of targeted AI governance frameworks.

Other researchers can adopt the IRAC method to undertake legal and regulatory analysis in digital health and malpractice, as well as other areas of healthcare law and policy. The structured approach enhances the rigor, clarity, and persuasiveness of legal analysis, contributing to the development of effective policies and practices that promote responsible innovation, protect patient rights, and maintain public trust in the healthcare system.

In summary, the IRAC method has allowed for a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the legal and regulatory issues surrounding malpractice in telemedicine and digital health in Ghana. The research papers [14, 45] further demonstrate the effectiveness of the IRAC method in analyzing legal and regulatory issues, serving as examples for other researchers to adopt this approach in their own analyses, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based policies and practices in the rapidly evolving healthcare system.

The Preliminary IRAC Analysis:

The following is the preliminary analysis of telemedicine, digital health and malpractice using the IRAC method:

Issues:

The main issues involve potential malpractice arising from telemedicine and digital health, specifically:

1) Patient privacy breaches

2) Negligence by healthcare providers

3) Leakage of sensitive patient information to the public

4) How to effectively regulate these issues in the digital space

Rules:

Several Ghanaian laws and regulations are relevant to these issues:

- Ghana's Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851) [3,4,11,26]
- Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857) [5,9]
- Ghana's Pharmacy Act, 1994 (Act 489) [6]
- Ghana's Food and Drugs Law, and Public Health Act [25,36]
- Health Institutions and Facilities Act 2011 (Act 829) [12,17]
- Alternative Medical Healthcare Practice Act 2000 (Act 575) [13,39]
- Evidence Act 1975 (NRCD 323) [14]
- Ghana's Courts Act 1993 (Act 459) [27]
- Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772) [15]

These laws cover various aspects of healthcare regulation, including oversight of health professionals, facilities, and alternative medicine. Some touch on use of electronic health records and admissibility of digital evidence. However, the research suggests gaps remain in sufficiently regulating AI use in healthcare. [3, 4, 5, 6,9,45]

Analysis:

The research highlights challenges in effectively applying existing regulations to emerging technologies like AI in healthcare. Key issues include:

- Ensuring patient data privacy and security with expanded use of electronic health records, especially with integration of AI [3,45]
- Establishing clear standards of care and liability for healthcare providers using AI-based systems, to determine when negligence has occurred [5,9,49]
- Maintaining public trust in the healthcare system with increasing collection and use of sensitive health data, including vaccination records [11,20-26]
- Enabling admissibility of AI-generated analyses as evidence in medical malpractice cases [14,27]
- Promoting transparency and accountability around AI use in healthcare, while mitigating potential biases [18,32,47,48]

The research calls for updating and harmonizing regulations to address these challenges, such as amending the Public Health Act and developing targeted AI governance frameworks. [3,45] It also emphasizes the importance of public education and provider training around responsible use of health data and AI. [20-24]

Conclusion:

While Ghana has a foundation of laws relevant to regulating malpractice in healthcare, gaps remain in addressing emerging issues raised by telemedicine and AI-based technologies. Protecting patient privacy, establishing clear liability standards, and ensuring transparency and fairness of AI systems are critical priorities.

Policymakers should assess current regulations and consider targeted amendments or new governance frameworks to mitigate malpractice risks. Public education and provider training will also be key to maintaining trust and

upholding standards of care in an evolving digital health landscape. A proactive, multi-stakeholder approach can help promote responsible innovation while safeguarding patient rights and safety.

Analysis & Findings

Issues

The rapid advancement of telemedicine and digital health technologies has revolutionized healthcare delivery, offering numerous benefits such as improved access, cost-effectiveness, and patient convenience. However, this digital transformation has also raised significant concerns regarding potential malpractice issues, particularly in the areas of patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, and the leakage of sensitive patient information to the public. These issues pose substantial challenges for healthcare regulators, policymakers, and legal professionals, as they navigate the complex landscape of ensuring patient safety, maintaining public trust, and establishing effective governance frameworks in the digital age.

One of the most pressing issues in telemedicine and digital health is the risk of patient privacy breaches. As healthcare providers increasingly rely on electronic health records (EHRs) and AI-based systems to store, analyze, and share patient data, the potential for unauthorized access, hacking, or misuse of sensitive information grows [3,45]. Mensah et al. [3] highlight the need for robust cybersecurity measures and stringent data protection regulations to safeguard patient privacy in the context of AI-enabled healthcare delivery in Ghana. The authors emphasize the importance of amending existing laws, such as the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851), to address the unique challenges posed by AI and ensure compliance with international data protection standards.

Closely related to privacy concerns is the issue of negligence by healthcare providers in the digital realm. As telemedicine and AI-based tools become more prevalent, questions arise regarding the standard of care and liability for healthcare professionals who rely on these technologies [5,9,49]. Mensah et al. [5] examine the adequacy of Ghana's Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857) in governing the use of AI in healthcare delivery and medical negligence issues. The research underscores the need for clear guidelines and training for healthcare providers to ensure they exercise due diligence when using AI-based systems and can be held accountable for any harm caused by negligent use of these technologies.

The leakage of sensitive patient information to the public is another significant concern in the digital health landscape. Breaches of confidential health data, including vaccination records, can erode public trust in the healthcare system and deter individuals from seeking necessary care [11,20-26]. Addy et al. [11] analyze Ghana's Public Health Act, 2012, and the role of AI in addressing vaccine supply and distribution challenges, highlighting the importance of secure data management practices to maintain public confidence in vaccination programs. The research emphasizes the need for robust data governance frameworks and public education initiatives to promote responsible use of health data and AI-based tools.

Effective regulation of malpractice in the digital health context also requires ensuring the admissibility of AI-generated analyses as evidence in medical malpractice cases [14,27]. Mensah et al. [14] assess whether Ghana's Evidence Act, 1975 (NRCD 323) can enable the admissibility of AI systems as expert witnesses in medical negligence lawsuits. The authors argue for the need to update evidence laws to accommodate the unique characteristics of AI-generated evidence and establish clear standards for its admissibility in court proceedings.

Furthermore, promoting transparency and accountability around AI use in healthcare is crucial to mitigating potential biases and ensuring fair, ethical, and trustworthy application of these technologies [18,32,47,48]. Mensah [18,48] provides a comprehensive review of bias mitigation, transparency, and accountability in AI systems, emphasizing the importance of developing robust ethical frameworks and governance mechanisms to prevent discriminatory or opaque decision-making in healthcare settings. The research highlights the need for multidisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals, AI experts, ethicists, and policymakers to establish best practices and guidelines for responsible AI deployment in healthcare.

To address these multifaceted issues, policymakers and regulators must adopt a proactive and holistic approach to governing malpractice in the digital health era. This requires a comprehensive review and harmonization of existing laws and regulations, such as the Public Health Act, Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, and Evidence Act,

to ensure they adequately cover the unique challenges posed by telemedicine and AI-based technologies [3,45]. Additionally, the development of targeted AI governance frameworks, as suggested by Mensah et al. [45], can provide a more focused and adaptive approach to regulating the use of AI in healthcare, promoting innovation while safeguarding patient rights and safety.

Moreover, investing in public education and provider training is essential to foster a culture of responsible innovation and maintain trust in the healthcare system [20-24]. Addy et al. [20-24] underscore the importance of addressing vaccine hesitancy among the educated population in Ghana through targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies. Similar efforts can be directed towards educating the public about the benefits and risks of telemedicine and AI-based tools, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health data and care options. Healthcare providers must also receive comprehensive training on the ethical and legal implications of using digital health technologies, ensuring they can leverage these tools effectively while upholding their professional responsibilities and maintaining high standards of care.

In sum, the advent of telemedicine and digital health has brought forth a range of malpractice issues, including patient privacy breaches, provider negligence, information leakage, and challenges in regulating these concerns effectively. This analysis provides valuable insights into the legal and ethical dimensions of these issues, highlighting the need for robust governance frameworks, public education, and provider training to mitigate risks and promote responsible innovation in the digital health landscape. By proactively addressing these challenges through a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and legal experts can work together to create a future where the benefits of telemedicine and AI-based technologies are realized while ensuring patient safety, privacy, and trust remain at the forefront of healthcare delivery.

Rules

The Rules section of this analysis focuses on the various Ghanaian laws and regulations that are relevant to the issues of malpractice in telemedicine and digital health. These legal frameworks provide the foundation for addressing concerns related to patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, leakage of sensitive patient information, and the overall regulation of digital health technologies. By examining these laws and their potential applications, we can better understand the current legal landscape and identify areas that may require further development or amendment to effectively govern malpractice in the digital health era.

One of the most significant pieces of legislation in this context is Ghana's Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851). This Act provides a comprehensive framework for the regulation of public health matters, including the prevention and control of diseases, the promotion of health, and the protection of individual and community health rights [3,4,11,26]. Mensah et al. [3] highlight the potential role of the Public Health Act in overseeing the use of AI in healthcare delivery and preventing medical errors. The authors argue that the Act could be amended to include specific provisions related to AI governance, ensuring that these technologies are deployed in a manner that prioritizes patient safety and privacy. Similarly, Addy et al. [11] examine the Public Health Act's role in addressing vaccine supply and distribution challenges, emphasizing the importance of secure data management practices and the potential for AI to enhance these efforts.

Another crucial law is the Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857), which establishes the regulatory framework for various healthcare professions in Ghana, including nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and medical practitioners [5,9]. This Act sets standards for professional conduct, disciplinary procedures, and the registration and licensing of healthcare providers. Mensah et al. [5,9] assess the adequacy of Act 857 in governing the use of AI in healthcare delivery and medical negligence issues. The authors argue that the Act should be updated to include specific provisions related to the use of AI by healthcare professionals, clarifying their responsibilities and liabilities when relying on these technologies. This would help ensure that healthcare providers exercise due diligence and can be held accountable for any harm caused by negligent use of AI-based tools.

The Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals Act, 1996 (Act 525) is another important legislation that establishes the Ghana Health Service and provides for the administration of teaching hospitals in the country [37]. This Act plays a significant role in regulating the quality of healthcare services and ensuring that healthcare facilities meet necessary standards. Nyante et al. [37] conduct a comparative analysis of nursing and midwifery regulation in

Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Liberia, highlighting the importance of strong regulatory frameworks in promoting quality healthcare delivery and preventing malpractice.

In the context of pharmaceutical regulation, Ghana's Pharmacy Act, 1994 (Act 489) is a key piece of legislation [6]. This Act regulates the practice of pharmacy, the sale and supply of drugs, and the manufacture of pharmaceutical products in Ghana. Mensah et al. [6] analyze the Pharmacy Act's provisions regarding quality control and negligence liability measures for AI-based pharmacy systems. The authors emphasize the need to update the Act to address the unique challenges posed by AI in the pharmaceutical sector, such as ensuring the accuracy and safety of AI-generated drug recommendations and establishing clear liability standards for pharmacists who rely on these systems.

The Food and Drugs Authority Act, 1992 (PNDCL 305B), and its subsequent amendments, is another important legislation that regulates the safety and quality of food, drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices in Ghana [25,36]. Mensah et al. [36] examine the role of the Food and Drugs Authority Act and its associated Legislative Instrument in regulating AI-based medical devices, apps, and systems to prevent negligence. The authors argue for the need to develop specific guidelines and standards for AI-based medical products to ensure their safety, effectiveness, and transparency.

In terms of healthcare facilities regulation, the Health Institutions and Facilities Act, 2011 (Act 829) plays a crucial role [12,17]. This Act regulates the licensing and operation of health institutions and facilities in Ghana, setting standards for quality care and patient safety. Mensah et al. [17] evaluate the adequacy of Act 829 in addressing medical negligence risks associated with the integration of AI systems in healthcare facilities. The authors suggest that the Act should be amended to include specific provisions related to AI governance, such as requirements for staff training, system validation, and incident reporting.

The Alternative Medicine Healthcare Practice Act, 2000 (Act 575) is another relevant piece of legislation that regulates the practice of alternative medicine in Ghana [13,39]. This Act establishes the Traditional Medicine Practice Council and provides for the registration and licensing of traditional medicine practitioners. Mensah et al. [13,39] explore the potential implications of AI integration in alternative medicine, focusing on issues of negligence and patient safety. The authors argue for the need to update Act 575 to address the unique challenges posed by AI in this context, such as ensuring the quality and safety of AI-based diagnostic and treatment tools used by alternative medicine practitioners.

In the context of medical malpractice litigation, the Evidence Act, 1975 (NRCD 323) is a crucial legal framework that governs the admissibility of evidence in Ghanaian courts [14]. Mensah et al. [14] assess whether the Evidence Act can accommodate the admissibility of AI systems as expert witnesses in medical negligence lawsuits. The authors argue for the need to update evidence laws to address the unique characteristics of AI-generated evidence, such as establishing standards for transparency, reliability, and explainability of AI-based analyses in legal proceedings.

Finally, the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772) provides a legal framework for electronic transactions and communications in Ghana, including the use of electronic signatures and the admissibility of electronic evidence in legal proceedings [15]. This Act has important implications for telemedicine and digital health, as it helps to facilitate secure and legally recognized electronic interactions between healthcare providers and patients. However, as highlighted by Mensah et al. [15], there may be a need to further develop specific provisions related to the use of AI in electronic health transactions, such as ensuring the privacy and security of AI-generated health data and establishing clear guidelines for obtaining informed consent in AI-assisted telemedicine consultations.

In summary, the various Ghanaian laws and regulations discussed in this Rules section provide a foundation for addressing malpractice issues in telemedicine and digital health. However, there are significant gaps and areas for improvement in these legal frameworks to effectively govern the use of AI and other digital health technologies. Policymakers and regulators must engage in a comprehensive review and amendment process to update these laws and regulations, ensuring they are well-equipped to address the unique challenges posed by the digital health landscape. This may involve incorporating specific provisions related to AI governance, clarifying liability standards for healthcare providers, strengthening data privacy and security requirements, and establishing guidelines for the

admissibility of AI-generated evidence in legal proceedings. By proactively adapting and harmonizing these legal frameworks, Ghana can create a robust and future-proof regulatory environment that promotes responsible innovation, protects patient rights, and upholds the highest standards of healthcare delivery in the digital age.

Analysis

The rapid advancement of telemedicine and digital health technologies has revolutionized healthcare delivery, offering numerous benefits such as improved access, cost-effectiveness, and patient convenience. However, this digital transformation has also raised significant concerns regarding potential malpractice issues, particularly in the areas of patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, and the leakage of sensitive patient information to the public. These issues pose substantial challenges for healthcare regulators, policymakers, and legal professionals, as they navigate the complex landscape of ensuring patient safety, maintaining public trust, and establishing effective governance frameworks in the digital age.

One of the most pressing issues in telemedicine and digital health is the risk of patient privacy breaches. As healthcare providers increasingly rely on electronic health records (EHRs) and AI-based systems to store, analyze, and share patient data, the potential for unauthorized access, hacking, or misuse of sensitive information grows [3,45]. Ghana's Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851) provides a comprehensive framework for the regulation of public health matters, including the protection of individual and community health rights [3,4,11,26]. However, as Mensah et al. [3] point out, the Act may require amendments to address the unique challenges posed by AI in healthcare delivery, such as ensuring robust cybersecurity measures and compliance with international data protection standards. The Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772) also plays a role in facilitating secure electronic interactions between healthcare providers and patients, but as Mensah et al. [15] suggest, further development of specific provisions related to AI governance and data privacy in digital health transactions may be necessary.

Closely related to privacy concerns is the issue of negligence by healthcare providers in the digital realm. As telemedicine and AI-based tools become more prevalent, questions arise regarding the standard of care and liability for healthcare professionals who rely on these technologies [5,9,49]. The Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857) establishes the regulatory framework for various healthcare professions in Ghana, setting standards for professional conduct and disciplinary procedures [5,9]. However, as Mensah et al. [5,9] argue, the Act should be updated to include specific provisions related to the use of AI by healthcare professionals, clarifying their responsibilities and liabilities when relying on these technologies. This would help ensure that healthcare providers exercise due diligence and can be held accountable for any harm caused by negligent use of AI-based tools. Furthermore, the Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals Act, 1996 (Act 525), which regulates the quality of healthcare services and facilities [37], could also be strengthened to address the integration of AI systems in healthcare settings, as suggested by Nyante et al. [37].

The leakage of sensitive patient information to the public is another significant concern in the digital health landscape. Breaches of confidential health data, including vaccination records, can erode public trust in the healthcare system and deter individuals from seeking necessary care [11,20-26]. Ghana's Public Health Act, 2012, plays a crucial role in addressing vaccine supply and distribution challenges, but as Addy et al. [11] suggest, the Act could be bolstered by incorporating provisions related to secure data management practices and the use of AI in vaccine delivery. The Food and Drugs Authority Act, 1992 (PNDCL 305B), and its associated Legislative Instrument, which regulate the safety and quality of medical products in Ghana [25,36], could also be updated to address the unique challenges posed by AI-based medical devices and apps, as argued by Mensah et al. [36]. Ensuring the security and confidentiality of sensitive health data, such as vaccination records, is essential to maintaining public confidence in digital health technologies and the overall healthcare system.

Effective regulation of malpractice in the digital health context also requires ensuring the admissibility of AI-generated analyses as evidence in medical malpractice cases [14,27]. The Evidence Act, 1975 (NRCD 323) governs the admissibility of evidence in Ghanaian courts [14]. However, as Mensah et al. [14] argue, the Act may need to be updated to accommodate the unique characteristics of AI-generated evidence, such as establishing standards for transparency, reliability, and explainability of AI-based analyses in legal proceedings. This is crucial to ensure that patients have access to fair and just legal remedies in cases of medical malpractice involving AI technologies. Additionally, Ghana's Courts Act, 1993 (Act 459), which regulates the jurisdiction and procedures of Ghanaian

courts [27], may also require amendments to address the admissibility and interpretation of AI-generated evidence in medical negligence cases, as suggested by Mensah et al. [27].

Promoting transparency and accountability around AI use in healthcare is essential to mitigating potential biases and ensuring fair, ethical, and trustworthy application of these technologies [18,32,47,48]. Mensah [18,48] provides a comprehensive review of bias mitigation, transparency, and accountability in AI systems, emphasizing the importance of developing robust ethical frameworks and governance mechanisms to prevent discriminatory or opaque decision-making in healthcare settings. The research highlights the need for multidisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals, AI experts, ethicists, and policymakers to establish best practices and guidelines for responsible AI deployment in healthcare. The Alternative Medicine Healthcare Practice Act, 2000 (Act 575), which regulates the practice of alternative medicine in Ghana [13,39], could also be updated to address the potential implications of AI integration in this context, such as ensuring the quality and safety of AI-based diagnostic and treatment tools used by alternative medicine practitioners, as argued by Mensah et al. [13,39].

To address these multifaceted issues, policymakers and regulators must adopt a proactive and holistic approach to governing malpractice in the digital health era. This requires a comprehensive review and harmonization of existing laws and regulations, such as the Public Health Act, Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, and Evidence Act, to ensure they adequately cover the unique challenges posed by telemedicine and AI-based technologies [3,45]. Mensah et al. [45] propose the development of targeted AI governance frameworks, which can provide a more focused and adaptive approach to regulating the use of AI in healthcare, promoting innovation while safeguarding patient rights and safety. Such frameworks could include specific provisions related to data privacy, liability standards, transparency requirements, and ethical guidelines for AI development and deployment in healthcare settings.

Moreover, investing in public education and provider training is crucial to foster a culture of responsible innovation and maintain trust in the healthcare system [20, 21, 22, 23, 24]. Addy et al. [20-24] underscore the importance of addressing vaccine hesitancy among the educated population in Ghana through targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies. Similar efforts can be directed towards educating the public about the benefits and risks of telemedicine and AI-based tools, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health data and care options. Healthcare providers must also receive comprehensive training on the ethical and legal implications of using digital health technologies, ensuring they can leverage these tools effectively while upholding their professional responsibilities and maintaining high standards of care.

In addition to legal and regulatory measures, the development of robust technical standards and best practices for AI development and deployment in healthcare is essential to mitigate risks and promote responsible innovation [18,32,47,48]. This includes establishing guidelines for data quality, model transparency, and algorithmic fairness, as well as implementing rigorous testing and validation processes to ensure the safety and effectiveness of AI-based tools in clinical settings. Collaboration among healthcare providers, AI developers, and regulatory bodies is necessary to create and maintain these standards, fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement in the digital health ecosystem.

Furthermore, policymakers and healthcare leaders should prioritize the development of a strong ethical framework to guide the use of AI in healthcare, addressing issues such as bias, discrimination, and respect for patient autonomy [18,32,47,48]. This framework should be informed by multidisciplinary perspectives, including input from healthcare professionals, ethicists, legal experts, and patient advocates. Regular review and updating of ethical guidelines will be necessary to keep pace with the rapid evolution of AI technologies and their applications in healthcare.

Finally, fostering international collaboration and harmonization of regulatory approaches to AI in healthcare is crucial to ensure consistent standards of patient protection and promote the responsible development and deployment of these technologies on a global scale [3,45]. This may involve engaging in dialogues with international bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to develop shared principles and guidelines for AI governance in healthcare. Collaborative research and knowledge-sharing initiatives among nations can also help identify best practices and strategies for addressing common challenges in the regulation of digital health technologies.

In summary, the analysis of the various legal and regulatory issues surrounding malpractice in telemedicine and digital health highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive and proactive approach to AI governance in healthcare. By carefully examining the existing legal frameworks, such as the Public Health Act, Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, and Evidence Act, policymakers can identify gaps and areas for improvement to effectively address the unique challenges posed by AI and other digital health technologies. Updating and harmonizing these laws, developing targeted AI governance frameworks, and fostering multidisciplinary collaboration are essential steps towards creating a robust regulatory environment that promotes responsible innovation, protects patient rights, and maintains public trust in the healthcare system. Simultaneously, investing in public education, provider training, and the development of ethical guidelines and technical standards will be crucial to ensure the safe, effective, and equitable deployment of AI in healthcare settings. As Ghana navigates the complex landscape of digital health transformation, a proactive and adaptive approach to malpractice regulation, guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, and patient-centricity, will be essential to harness the full potential of these technologies while safeguarding the interests of patients and society as a whole.

Conclusion

In light of the comprehensive analysis of the legal and regulatory landscape governing malpractice in telemedicine and digital health, it is evident that a multifaceted approach is necessary to effectively address the various issues raised, including patient privacy breaches, negligence by healthcare providers, leakage of sensitive patient information, and the overall regulation of digital health technologies. To mitigate and ameliorate these concerns, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders must work together to implement practical solutions and adapt existing legal frameworks to the unique challenges posed by the digital health era.

Firstly, to address patient privacy breaches, it is crucial to strengthen data protection regulations and ensure that healthcare providers and technology developers adhere to strict cybersecurity standards. Amending the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851) to include specific provisions related to AI governance and data privacy in healthcare, as suggested by Mensah et al. [3], would be a significant step towards safeguarding patient information. Additionally, updating the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772) to incorporate guidelines for secure electronic health transactions and AI-assisted telemedicine consultations, as proposed by Mensah et al. [15], would further enhance patient privacy protection. Healthcare organizations should also invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructure, regular security audits, and staff training on data protection best practices to minimize the risk of unauthorized access or misuse of sensitive patient information.

Secondly, to tackle the issue of negligence by healthcare providers in the digital realm, it is essential to clarify the standard of care and liability for professionals using AI-based tools. Updating the Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857) to include specific provisions related to the use of AI by healthcare professionals, as recommended by Mensah et al. [5,9], would help establish clear guidelines for responsible AI deployment and accountability in case of negligence. Furthermore, integrating AI governance principles into the Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals Act, 1996 (Act 525), as suggested by Nyante et al. [37], would ensure that healthcare facilities have appropriate oversight mechanisms in place to monitor the use of AI systems and prevent malpractice. Regular training and education programs for healthcare professionals on the ethical and legal implications of using AI-based tools should also be implemented to promote responsible practices and maintain high standards of care.

Thirdly, to address the leakage of sensitive patient information to the public, it is crucial to develop robust data governance frameworks and implement strict confidentiality measures. Strengthening the Public Health Act, 2012, to include provisions related to secure data management practices and the use of AI in vaccine delivery, as proposed by Addy et al. [11], would help safeguard sensitive health data, such as vaccination records. Additionally, updating the Food and Drugs Authority Act, 1992 (PNDCL 305B), and its associated Legislative Instrument to address the unique challenges posed by AI-based medical devices and apps, as suggested by Mensah et al. [36], would further enhance the security and confidentiality of patient information. Healthcare organizations should also implement strict access controls, regular data audits, and employee training on confidentiality obligations to minimize the risk of unauthorized disclosure of patient data.

Fourthly, to ensure effective regulation of malpractice in the digital health context, it is necessary to update legal frameworks to accommodate the admissibility of AI-generated evidence in medical negligence cases. Amending the Evidence Act, 1975 (NRCD 323) to establish standards for transparency, reliability, and explainability of AI-based analyses in legal proceedings, as argued by Mensah et al. [14], would be a crucial step towards facilitating fair and just legal remedies for patients in cases of malpractice involving AI technologies. Additionally, updating the Courts Act, 1993 (Act 459) to address the admissibility and interpretation of AI-generated evidence, as suggested by Mensah et al. [27], would further streamline the legal process and ensure that patients have access to appropriate legal recourse in cases of malpractice.

Moreover, promoting transparency and accountability in AI use in healthcare is essential to mitigate potential biases and ensure fair, ethical, and trustworthy application of these technologies. Developing robust ethical frameworks and governance mechanisms, as highlighted by Mensah [18,48], would help prevent discriminatory or opaque decision-making in healthcare settings. Policymakers should collaborate with healthcare professionals, AI experts, ethicists, and patient advocates to establish best practices and guidelines for responsible AI deployment in healthcare, taking into account the unique considerations of different medical specialties, such as alternative medicine, as discussed by Mensah et al. [13,39].

In addition to these specific recommendations, it is crucial for policymakers to adopt a proactive and holistic approach to governing malpractice in the digital health era. This involves conducting a comprehensive review and harmonization of existing laws and regulations, such as the Public Health Act, Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, and Evidence Act, to ensure they adequately cover the unique challenges posed by telemedicine and AI-based technologies [3,45]. Developing targeted AI governance frameworks, as proposed by Mensah et al. [45], can provide a more focused and adaptive approach to regulating the use of AI in healthcare, promoting innovation while safeguarding patient rights and safety.

Furthermore, investing in public education and provider training is essential to foster a culture of responsible innovation and maintain trust in the healthcare system [20-24]. Implementing targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies, as suggested by Addy et al. [20-24], can help address vaccine hesitancy and other concerns related to digital health technologies. Healthcare providers must receive comprehensive training on the ethical and legal implications of using AI-based tools to ensure they can effectively leverage these technologies while upholding their professional responsibilities and maintaining high standards of care.

Finally, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration and international cooperation is essential to develop consistent standards and best practices for AI governance in healthcare. Engaging in dialogues with international bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and participating in collaborative research and knowledge-sharing initiatives can help identify effective strategies for addressing common challenges in the regulation of digital health technologies.

In conclusion, addressing the complex issues of malpractice in telemedicine and digital health requires a comprehensive and proactive approach that involves updating legal frameworks, developing targeted AI governance mechanisms, promoting transparency and accountability, investing in public education and provider training, and fostering multidisciplinary collaboration. By implementing the practical recommendations outlined in this analysis, policymakers and healthcare stakeholders can work together to create a robust and adaptive regulatory environment that promotes responsible innovation, protects patient rights, and maintains public trust in the healthcare system. As Ghana continues to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of digital health, a commitment to proactive and patient-centric malpractice regulation will be essential to harness the full potential of these technologies while safeguarding the interests of patients and society as a whole.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the analysis, the following recommendations can be made to address the issues of malpractice in telemedicine and digital health in Ghana:

1. Update existing legal frameworks: Policymakers should conduct a comprehensive review and harmonization of relevant laws and regulations, such as the Public Health Act, Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, and

Evidence Act, to ensure they adequately cover the unique challenges posed by telemedicine and AI-based technologies [3,45].

2. Develop targeted AI governance mechanisms: The government should develop specific AI governance frameworks that provide a focused and adaptive approach to regulating the use of AI in healthcare, promoting innovation while safeguarding patient rights and safety [45].

3. Promote transparency and accountability: Healthcare providers and technology developers should be required to adhere to strict transparency and accountability measures, ensuring that AI-based systems are explainable, unbiased, and subject to regular audits and oversight [18,32,47,48].

4. Invest in public education: The government and healthcare stakeholders should invest in public education campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits and risks of telemedicine and digital health technologies, empowering patients to make informed decisions about their health data and care options [20-24].

5. Provide comprehensive provider training: Healthcare professionals should receive mandatory training on the ethical and legal implications of using AI-based tools, ensuring they can effectively leverage these technologies while upholding their professional responsibilities and maintaining high standards of care [5,9].

6. Foster multidisciplinary collaboration: Policymakers, healthcare providers, legal professionals, AI experts, and ethicists should collaborate to develop best practices and guidelines for responsible AI deployment in healthcare, taking into account the unique considerations of different medical specialties [13,39].

7. Strengthen cybersecurity measures: Healthcare organizations should invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructure, regular security audits, and staff training on data protection best practices to minimize the risk of unauthorized access or misuse of sensitive patient information [3,15].

8. Establish clear liability standards: Policymakers should work with legal experts and healthcare stakeholders to establish clear liability standards for healthcare providers using AI-based tools, ensuring that patients have access to fair and just legal remedies in cases of malpractice [5,9,14,27].

9. Promote international cooperation: The Ghanaian government should actively engage with international bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to develop consistent standards and best practices for AI governance in healthcare, learning from the experiences of other countries and sharing knowledge and expertise.

10. Continuously monitor and adapt regulations: As the digital health landscape continues to evolve rapidly, policymakers should establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and adaptation of regulations, ensuring that the legal and regulatory framework remains responsive to new challenges and opportunities in telemedicine and AI-based healthcare delivery.

By implementing these recommendations, Ghana can take proactive steps towards creating a robust and adaptive regulatory environment that promotes responsible innovation, protects patient rights, and maintains public trust in the digital health era. This will require sustained commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, legal professionals, technology developers, and patient advocates.

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