LATINMUN 2026

United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Addressing the ethical implications of emerging health technologies in the digital era

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Welcoming message from the chair:

Welcome to LATINMUN 2026, it's a great pleasure to have you join us to be part of the Office on Drugs and Crime Committee, where with your innovative and creative ideas, together we will be discussing the influence of criminal organization in Latin America.
We encourage to have a respectful debate, we encourage respectful debate, useful problem-solving, and collaborations that can make you work towards meaningful resolutions. The chair encourages each delegate to participate at any chance to keep the discussion organized and flowing.

Sincerely,
Juan Felipe Borbon and Sofia Cantu

Committee's Background:

UNESCO is a part of the United Nations that focuses on education, science and culture. Unlike groups like the World Health Organization, UNESCOs role in the health field is different. Since 1993 UNESCO has been the heart of the UN. This is the year they created the International Bioethics Committee. The International Bioethics Committee is

made up of 36 experts from around the world including doctors, lawyers and philosophers. Their main goal is to make sure that new scientific discoveries respect dignity and do not harm our basic rights.

The International Bioethics Committees work is based on major international agreements. One of the important ones is the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. This document was an achievement because it was the first time in history that almost every country in the world agreed on a set of ethical rules for medicine. The Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights says that when we use technologies we must always think about the social and environmental impact. For example it explains that medical research should not happen in rich countries while ignoring the needs of poorer ones.

UNESCO also created a second group called the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee. The Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee is made up of 36 Member States which're actual government representatives. Having two groups is very important because the experts in the International Bioethics Committee suggest the rules and the governments in the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee decide how to turn those rules into laws. Since its start UNESCO has helped over 80 countries set up their National Bioethics Committees. These national groups help local doctors and scientists follow the rules in their own hometowns.

In years UNESCOs mission has expanded to include the digital world. UNESCO realized that health is no longer about biology it is also about data and computers. In 2021 UNESCO adopted a landmark Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. This was a step because it gave countries a roadmap for using Artificial Intelligence safely. UNESCO believes that if we do not have rules technology might be used to control people instead of helping them live better lives.

Finally UNESCO focuses on Open Science. Open Science is the belief that scientific knowledge belongs to everyone, not big companies. In 2026 UNESCO is working harder than ever to make sure that health secrets are shared globally. UNESCO argues that if we want to stop pandemics or treat rare diseases countries must work together and share their data. By doing this UNESCO acts as a bridge, between high-tech science and the human values that keep us all safe.

Topic Background:

The ethical implications of emerging health technologies in the digital era involve the moral, societal, and governance challenges posed by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, machine learning, wearable devices, telemedicine, genomic editing tools like CRISPR, digital therapeutics, and neurotechnologies. These innovations are transforming healthcare by enabling precise diagnostics, personalized treatments, real-time remote monitoring, and expanded access to care. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing into 2026, adoption has surged, with the FDA authorizing over 1,400 AI-enabled medical devices by late 2025. While promising greater efficiency, cost reduction, chronic disease management, and precision medicine, these technologies raise serious risks as they handle sensitive data.

Historically, healthcare has incorporated technologies from electronic records to imaging, but the current digital shift creates interconnected, data-intensive systems. Wearables track vital signs, AI analyzes vast datasets for early detection, telemedicine enables virtual care, neurotechnologies interface with the brain, and CRISPR allows targeted genetic changes. These tools offer improved outcomes and global equity. Informed consent is complicated, as patients may not fully understand how their information shapes algorithms or future care. Neurotechnologies add issues of mental privacy and cognitive liberty, requiring special protections for neural data.

Key ethical challenges include algorithmic bias and health equity. Many AI systems, trained on non-diverse datasets, underperform for certain racial, ethnic, gender, age, or socioeconomic groups, leading to misdiagnoses, delayed treatment, or unfair resource allocation. The digital divide,lacking smartphones, internet, literacy, or affordability, excludes older adults, rural communities, and low-income populations, widening disparities. Additional concerns involve environmental impacts from data centers and e-waste, commercial priorities over public health, transparency difficulties due to opaque models, liability questions when errors occur, and potential erosion of human judgment and empathy in care. CRISPR raises fears of germline editing affecting future generations and unintended effects, while neurotechnologies question human dignity, identity, and risks of misuse for enhancement or surveillance.

International and national responses include the World Health Organization's extended Global Strategy on Digital Health through 2027, which stresses ethical governance, privacy, bias mitigation, transparency, and equitable access to support universal health coverage while placing human rights at the core. In 2025, UNESCO adopted the first global Recommendation on the Ethics of Neurotechnology, establishing rights-based safeguards for mental privacy, consent, dignity, inclusivity, and protection of vulnerable groups across the technology lifecycle. The FDA's 2025 guidances on AI devices promote a total product lifecycle approach with transparency, diverse datasets for bias reduction, post-market surveillance, and change control plans to ensure safety across populations. Broader strategies call for user-centered design, digital literacy, multidisciplinary collaboration, and continuous monitoring. As adoption accelerates in 2026, proactive ethical frameworks are vital to prevent erosion of trust, amplification of inequalities, or harm, while harnessing these technologies for more equitable, person-centered healthcare through adaptive standards, inclusive data practices, and commitment to dignity, justice, autonomy, and fairness.

Current Situation:

As we move through 2026 the Global Digital Health Divide is a big problem. This is the difference between people who have access to high-tech medicine and those who do not. Recent statistics from 2025 show that 95% of people in wealthy nations have access to digital health tools but over 2.5 billion people worldwide still do not have reliable internet. This means they cannot use doctors or modern health apps. The Global Digital Health Divide is a concern for UNESCO because it can create a world where only the rich can live healthy lives. A second major concern is the rise of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare. While Artificial Intelligence can find diseases faster than humans it often has hidden biases. A report from 2025 found that 83% of Artificial Intelligence models used to help with mental health were at risk of being biased. For example some Artificial Intelligence tools were 50% less likely to recommend treatment for patients from minority backgrounds compared to others with the symptoms.

UNESCO is pushing for transparency, which means companies must prove their Artificial Intelligence is fair before they can use it on real patients. The third big topic for 2026 is Neurotechnology. Technology that can connect our brains to computers. This industry has grown fast with investments increasing by 700% in the last decade reaching over $33 billion. On November 12 2025 UNESCO adopted the ever Global Framework on the Ethics of Neurotechnology. This was a moment because it created rules for mental privacy. UNESCO wants to make sure that your thoughts and brain data cannot be sold to advertisers or used by employers to track how hard you are working.

Fourth the committee is looking at the ethics of Gene Editing, also known as CRISPR.Scientists now have the power to cut and paste DNA to cure genetic diseases. However this raises a question: Could we one day use this to create designer babies? In 2026 UNESCO is working with least three pilot countries to test new training modules

for national authorities. They want to ensure that Gene Editing is only used to save lives and never used for eugenics, which's the dangerous idea of trying to create perfect humans.

Lastly there is a growing focus on Children's Rights in the Digital Era. In 2026 UNESCO warned that children are the most vulnerable to new health tech. Because their brains are still developing, using neuro-headsets or Artificial Intelligence-driven health trackers could affect their growth in ways we do not yet understand. UNESCO is calling for a ban on using health data to nudge or manipulate children's behavior.
The goal for 2026 is to build a human-centered world where technology serves the Global Digital Health Divide and other issues rather, than us serving the technology and this includes Artificial Intelligence, Neurotechnology, Gene Editing and Children's Rights.

Chair/Moderator Conclusion:

As we conclude, on addressing the ethical implications of emerging health technologies in the digital era, UNESCO reaffirms its commitment to a human-centered approach. The rapid rise of AI, neurotechnology, gene editing, and digital health tools offers immense potential for equitable healthcare, yet it also risks deepening the global digital divide, algorithmic bias, and threats to privacy and dignity. Only through transparent, inclusive, and rights-based governance can we ensure these innovations truly serve all humanity rather than a privileged few.

Delegates, the responsibility now lies with you. In this committee, we urge you to craft bold, practical resolutions that close gaps in access, protect vulnerable populations and embed ethical safeguards at every stage of technological development. Together, build a framework where technology advances global health with fairness, justice, and respect for human rights at its core.

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