

**Title:** Current transformation of Finnish health care system – changes in organization structure and information systems

**Plenary speaker:** Jarmo Reponen, Professor of Health Information Systems, University of Oulu, Finland

**Abstract:**

Finland is currently experiencing its biggest health care reform since past 50 years. Motivated by the rising healthcare costs and the current obstacles to provide sustainable and equal care to its citizen, the country is now striving towards a more integrated, a more patient centered and a more knowledge-based care. According to recent European Union monitoring activities (DESI), Finland is already one of the most digitalized countries in Europe. This is demonstrated in the health care sector with a long time 100% coverage of electronic health records, e-prescriptions with cross-border services and a comprehensive national health information exchange with a patient portal. But digitalization alone is not enough, if the current health and social care structures do not support a novel health and social care delivery. Therefore, since January 2023, Finland has combined all the actors within its regional public health care and social care organisation model under the same administration. There are now 21 new welfare service counties, which along with City of Helsinki and County of Åland are in charge of secondary hospital-based care, primary health care and social care services. The main principle is that these new regional organisations have one administration, one budget and one uniform salaried staff. Compared to many other countries, e.g. the primary care physicians work within these organisations and not as independent GP practices. Also the municipality wards and nursing homes as well as elderly care is now within the same organisation, not separated from specialized care. The background idea is to improve the care pathways and to avoid the gaps between the various caregivers. At the same time there will be new incentives to develop preventive care, and not to focus on treatments only, because the final outcome on the population level will influence to the budget of the region. National balance in services is anticipated to be achieved by supervising the regional budgets in national level, and the municipality taxes cannot be used for health care. In order to achieve the targets, there are new requirements to information systems and care delivery. The regions are encouraged to have uniform health/social care information systems for primary and secondary healthcare and social care. Knowledge based decision-making requires data retrieval and analysis capabilities and citizen involvement requires new tools for virtualized health care in public health services and professional – citizen interactions. The presentation will reveal the current situation, anticipated results and foreseen challenges, while stimulating discussion, how much these ideas can be utilized as an example for other countries.

**Presentation of speaker:** Jarmo Reponen is a professor of healthcare information systems at the Research Unit of Health Sciences and Technology at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland. He holds a medical specialist degree in radiology and a Finnish special competence in mammography screening and healthcare information technology. His research focuses on assessment of health information systems, their availability, use and user experience. He has contributed to research in e-Health, teleradiology, telemedicine, AI and machine learning in radiology, mobile communication, and more recently in health technology assessment for digital health applications. He has more than 30 years of experience in radiology information system and electronic patient record system development. He has carried out several international telemedicine and digital radiology projects and has served as an expert in Finnish national initiatives. He has been a president or a board member and a conference organiser in many societies in the field. He is the recipient of the Louis Lareng Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth (2021) and the Carl Wegelius Award of the Radiological Society of Finland (2016).