

Telemedicine

for the benefit of patients, healthcare systems and society



How to benefit from Telemedicine?

Europe is facing the challenge of delivering quality healthcare to all its citizens, at an affordable cost. The increasing demand by citizens for best quality healthcare, the costs of managing chronic diseases, and the need for prolonged medical care for the ageing society are major factors behind this challenge.

Healthcare expenditure in Europe is already significant (8.5% of GDP on average) and rising faster than economic growth itself. The emerging situation calls for a change in the way healthcare is delivered. Failing to take action will limit what health systems will be able to offer. It will lead to deterioration of the quality of care and inequality in access to healthcare. Illness prevention and disease management need to be improved and a more active participation of patients in the process of personalised care should be enabled.



Telemedicine is one of the tools which can help to address challenges, like contributing to deliver better quality of care, to increase accessibility to healthcare in remote geographical locations or to overcome shortages of health professionals in given situations. It can also contribute to a better involvement of patients in the

management and follow-up of their own healthcare.

Recognising the potential benefits of ICT tools in this context, the European Commission has been supporting efforts in the field of ICT for Health for the last 20 years. The Forth¹, Fifth², Sixth³ and Seventh⁴ framework programme of the European Community for research and technological development (FP4, FP5, FP6 and FP7) have supported systematically the

funding of research projects in the area of Personal Health Systems (PHS), leading to a new generation of telemedicine tools and services for person-centric care. Research work has led to the development of prototypes that empower individuals to manage their own health status, support self- and home-care and promote a positive attitude to lifestyle management and disease prevention. Despite the significant investments in research and the technological advancements today, we still observe a relatively low take-up of telemedicine applications in everyday medicine. Reasons

¹ <http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/ka1/health/projectbooklet/projects.htm>

² http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/docs/publications/fp5-ehealth-applications-relating-to-health.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/research/fp6projects/index_en.htm

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/research/fp7phs/index_en.htm

for this include a lack of confidence and acceptance of telemedicine tools by health authorities, professionals and users, a lack of legal clarity regarding issues such as reimbursement and liability and technical issues including the lack of standardised processes and tools that do not work together (lack of interoperability).

With the objective of finding solutions to this situation by identifying barriers and triggering factors and suggesting ways forward to support deployment of telemedicine across Europe, the Commission issued a Communication on Telemedicine⁵. Whereas it is understood that the organization of health care is solely a Member State issue, telemedicine services have the potential to be used (and are already used) in cross-border settings. The European Commission has a specific mandate to address cross-border care issues which cannot be addressed on a national basis alone. Thus the objective of the Communication is to help Member States to take advantage of the potential benefits of telemedicine according to their specific needs, draw on the experience of other Member States in the area and at the same time tackle important aspects related to cross-border care issues linked to telemedicine practice (a new platform called "ePractice.eu" has been set up to help the different actors in the field sharing their good/best practices by submitting cases, events, news, workshops, ...)⁶.

The Commission extensively gathered information and consulted stakeholders on the subject of telemedicine. This started by an open online survey which gathering first contributions, followed by the TeleHealth event in December 2007⁷ (see website for details, including the conference report). The consultation process allowed good interaction with stakeholders associations and EU funded projects (see CLEAR⁸ – Clinical Leading

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/policy/telemedicine/index_en.htm

⁶ <http://www.ePractice.eu>

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http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/telehealth_2007/index_en.htm

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http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/docs/cip/200811clear-factsheet.pdf

Environment for the Assessment and validation of Rehabilitation Protocols for home care – telerehabilitation monitoring). Policy orientation debates have taken place in the last two i2010 subgroup meetings and at an Industry-focused roundtable held at the European Parliament early April 2008. Further consultation took place at Med-e-Tel conference in Luxembourg on April and the eHealth 2008 Conference in Slovenia in May⁹.

A foreseen staff working paper on telemedicine is planned to give additional information on telemedicine uses and on the consultation process and a report presenting a comprehensive mapping exercise of the leadership and guidance shown by the European Commission since 20 years in eHealth (Policy, Research and Deployment activities) will be released in March.

Further information on Telemedicine related projects

Seventh Framework Programme

[http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/research/fp7pchs/index_en.htm]

CD-Medics, Chronious, DIAdvisor, HeartCycle, Metabo, Perform, Pocemon, TheraEDGE

Sixth Framework Programme

HEARTFAID (<http://www.heartfaid.org>)

MYHEART

(<http://www.hitechprojects.com/euprojects/myheart/>)

OFSETH (<http://www.ofseth.org/>)

PIPS (<http://www.pips.eu.org>)

Fifth Framework Programme

ADICOL (<http://www.adicol.org/>)

AMON (<http://www.medictouch.net/AMON>)

CHS (<http://lomiweb.med.auth.gr/chs/>)

MOBIHEALTH (<http://www.mobihealth.org>)

PANACEIA-ITV (<http://www.itv4health.org/>)

TOPCARE (<http://www.topcare-network.com>)

WEALTHY (<http://www.wealthy-ist.com>)

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http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/policy/eh_ealth_conf