

SMEs to contribute to delivery of health care and quality of life for ageing society through telemedicine

EHTEL paves way to sustainable health care

Published: 05/05/2008

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM - (HealthTech Wire) - The findings of a report recently published by the European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL) will be presented at the upcoming eHealth High Level Conference in Portoroz, Slovenia 6-7 May 2008.

Sustainable Telemedicine: paradigms for future-proof healthcare presents the current achievements and best practice examples drawn from a number of either on-going or completed pilot projects across Europe. Based on the achievements, EHTEL sets out a number of recommendations for achieving sustainable telemedicine services in Europe by 2020.

These include:

- facilitating change in everyday operations for health care professionals and patients;
- using patient-centred telemedicine to involve and engage professionals and patients in the overall eHealth strategy;
- establishing a culture of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration between different specialised medical fields;
- formulating explicit national strategies, scenarios and business models for sustainable telemedicine;
- establishing a European support framework to coordinate progress and future deployment of sustainable telemedicine.

EHTEL believes that we will encounter an historic turning point for eHealthcare in the upcoming years. While over the past years sophisticated eHealth infrastructures with health cards and highly secure networks are spreading all over the place, current e-services like reimbursement and Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions are useful but far from becoming eHealth killer applications.

As part of a sustainable health and social care in an ageing European society, EHTEL also believes that a new type of health service industry, composed mainly of public and private sector SMEs is emerging in Europe. This emerging industry and new innovative health service professionals are to focus on high medical quality for premium health services with special emphasis on quality of life for citizens and patients.

I believe that SMEs have a major role to play in supporting the delivery of future health care through pro-vision of care at home. This emerging industry will not only have an enormous positive impact on the quality of chronically ill patients and elderly people but also alleviate pressure on national health systems and boost European economy by creating possibly millions of new jobs. This will not only directly contribute to the EU's Lisbon agenda goals of creating more jobs and growth, but also to the implementation of the block's Lead Market Initiative on creating innovative solutions for public services, said EHTEL President Martin D. Denz.

This new breed of health service provider is positioned somewhere between traditional health professionals and the IT industry and seeks to combine high medical quality with entrepreneurship and sound business understanding.

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"We are facing a dramatic increase of demand for our telemedicine services. In particular health insurance providers are seizing the occasion to support better and more efficient healthcare through embedding our integrated telemonitoring services for persons with cardiac risks and chronic diseases into their portfolios. Hence the usefulness and sustainability of our services is increasingly recognised," said Professor Harald Korb, Chief Medical Officer of vitaphone, a pioneering German company already in the business.

A further description of this emerging Telemedicine service industry will be outlined by Martin Denz, president of EHTEL, in the eHealth High Level Conference on 6-7 May 2008.