eHealth—Transforming European healthcare system

FLEISHMAN™ HILLARD
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

THIS PAPER FROM FLEISHMAN-HILLARD OFFERS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF EHEALTH IN THE EU TODAY.

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE RAPID GROWTH OF INTERNET USAGE HAS BROUGHT BANKING AND SHOPPING SERVICES INTO PEOPLE'S HOME. FOLLOWING EBANKING AND ECOMMERCE, EHEALTH HAS NOW ENTERED THE "EAGE" WITH THE APPLICATION OF ICTS TO THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY. EHEALTH SERVICES ALLOW PATIENTS TO MONITOR AND MANAGE THEIR OWN HEALTH AND MEDICAL DATA FROM HOME, AND INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS, ON-DEMAND ACCESSIBILITY OF THESE RECORDS TO ALL HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS, ETC.

WITH A POTENTIAL VALUE OF €20 BILLION IN EUROPE, EHEALTH COULD BECOME THE THIRD LARGEST EUROPEAN HEALTH INDUSTRY, AFTER PHARMACEUTICALS AND MEDICAL DEVICES. HOWEVER, WHILE THE DEMAND FOR CLINICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TOOLS FOR TELEMEDICINE AND HOMECARE IS CONSTANTLY INCREASING, MANY BARRIERS MUST STILL BE OVERCOME BEFORE EHEALTH CAN MAKE A REAL IMPACT.

www.fleishman-hillard.eu

A FUTURE WITH EHEALTH - BENEFITS

Preparing health systems for an ageing population in the EU: By 2050, one third of the European population will be over 60. Given that a large number of health problems and chronic illnesses increase with age, public expenditure on healthcare is likely to grow by 1.5-3% of the GDP across the EU in the same time period. By embracing self-care and eHealth services via mobile phones or PC, the current active generation could help lessen the burden put on health budgets over the coming decades.

Quality increase: With more effective and efficient patient-centered health services and lower costs, new health technologies have the potential to greatly improve patient satisfaction. eHealth solutions offer patients better access to care by reducing waiting times, maximizing resources and effectively delivering cross-border treatment.

Mobility: In today's Europe which boasts the free movement of services, European citizens are now entitled to receive healthcare treatment in other member states. With a faster transfer and exchange of data, eHealth services do not only reduce administrative burden but also guarantee an efficient, precise and immediate service to the end-users.

Health care accessibility and equality: eHealth ensures that healthcare is available and accessible to all those in need on an equal footing. Services such as telemedicine, which provides healthcare at a distance, can improve access to specialized care in areas suffering from a shortage of expertise, or in remote areas.

Continuity of care: Today, eHealth offers the possibility for patients and health providers to share information and expertise through peer-to-peer communication. The results are better coordination and better follow-up of the health care services provided.

For more information

Teresa Calvano
ViP, Associate Director
Fleishman-Hillard
Square de Meeûs 35
1000 Brussels

Tel: +32 2 230 05 45
Fax: +32 2 230 57 06

teresa.calvano
@fleishmaneurope.com

The Holmes Report 2009/2010
European Consultancy of the Year

EHEALTH - HOW DOES IT WORK? TELEMEDICINE: AN EXAMPLE

Equipped with a computer, specific eHealth software and digital monitoring devices, diabetic patients can now be followed by medical teams from a distance, no matter what their geographical situation is. Each day, a diabetic patient would measure his/her own glucose, blood pressure and weight values and then store the data on a PC. This data is then sent to a telemedical service center where a team of qualified doctors and nurses observe the electronic patient records, collate and evaluate the medical results, and transfer them to the respective physicians. In the case of an emergency, the telemedical service center can offer a direct intervention.

A FUTURE WITHOUT eHEALTH - BARRIERS

Lack of interoperability

By 2010, it is expected that 5% of the European health budget will be spent on healthcare technologies. But what would be the value of these investments if different healthcare systems were not connected or did not interact easily? Indeed, many hospitals still have software which are not compatible with the hardware used in their own surgery or radiology departments.

This lack of interoperability has been identified as the main barrier to the proper roll-out of eHealth in Europe and to the sustainability of Europe's healthcare system. Not only does this prevent health professionals from having rapid access to vital patient data and therefore from offering high-standard healthcare service, but health service providers may also have to invest considerable funds to make systems that operate with different standards interoperable.

For your business

Currently, there is no agreement on a consistent set of EU-level harmonized standards. If your business is willing to achieve more interoperability, you should join a multi-stakeholder forum (e.g. the Continua Health Alliance, the EHTEL Association or AmCham EU) that offers a platform for dialogue on how best to achieve a high level and standard of interoperability in Europe. Also, in the framework of the ICT Policy Support Programme, the Commission has opened a new call for proposals focusing on interoperability. <u>*Link:*</u> *http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/cip_ict_psp/index_en.htm*

Data protection

Processing and transferring personal data via the internet and new technologies has become an important part of our daily lives. However, the adoption of a European approach to protect personal health data is a prerequisite for a successful deployment of eHealth in the European society. Indeed, there are concerns amongst data privacy advocates that personal data will be used for commercial purposes or transferred to their employers or insurance companies.

For your business

Health data is currently covered by the Data Protection Directive which is to be reviewed in 2010-2011. In this regard, a public consultation was organised in 2009 and closed end of December. To offer patients the guarantee that their personal data will be protected at the highest possible level, businesses with an interest in this field should begin engaging with the Commission.

Consumer and practitioner skepticism

While the potential and the quality of eHealth services is increasingly recognized, health professionals and patients remain reluctant to switch from traditional healthcare systems to technological ones. Poor understanding from patients of the functioning of eHealth and its benefits, combined with a lack of appropriate training and incentives for health professionals to use eHealth tools, hampers the chances for eHealth to be established as Europe's future sustainable health system.

For your business

If your business produces eHealth technologies and if you have ideas on how to develop, validate and uptake ICT applications that would create a culture of security in eHealth and improve the management of health risks and safety, you should share your expertise with EU policymakers. Similarly, ideas on how to better involve healthcare practitioners in the development of these ICT applications and how they should be educated are also welcome.

Reimbursement

eHealth services made their first appearance a decade ago, yet Europe's legal framework still lacks a model for reimbursement for eHealth services. The consequences are threefold: **a**/ increased health costs for patients, **b**/ no incentives for doctors to use eHealth devices and **c**/no stimulus for ICT health providers to develop a sustainable health model based on new ICT. As a result, there is no opportunity to promote the existence of such services.

For your business

If your business is involved in the eHealth sector and is interested in clarifying the legal framework regarding reimbursement at an EU level, your company should engage in a double dialogue, both:

a/ with the European Commission, to share your legal needs with them, and,

b/ with the public health authorities and national health reimbursement organizations, to present the benefits of eHealth solutions and their impact on patients' health and to help move forward to an outcome-base reimbursement.

"We need to build a bridge between the different healthcare systems in different member states. This is a way to enlarge the market and avoid fragmentation."
Gérard Comyn, Head of Unit - ICT for Health DG INFOSOC

"In the last ten years, EHTEL has witnessed e-health becoming a powerful force in modernising healthcare, improving quality and efficiency of care, empowering patients, and increasing patient safety".
Martin Denz, President of the European Health Telematics Association - EHTEL

"eHealth will be central in making the transition from institutions to the homes of patients".
Johan Hjertqvist, President of Health Consumer Powerhouse (Friends of Europe Conference, April 2009)

FLEISHMAN
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS
HILLARD