

General Objectives

The need for telehealth responds to most people's wish to stay at home. Telehealth contributes to the growing needs of people with chronic and long-term conditions (for example, by making sure that hospital or institutionally based services are better targeted) and to the preventative health agenda (by helping people to better manage their own health).

The aims of the project are to influence European-wide confidence and acceptance by influencing a common approach on the political level (harmonisation), semantic level (agreeing common priorities), level of education and awareness raising (evaluation, monitoring and analysis and reflection on good practice).

The European Code of Practice for Telehealth Services being developed within the TeleSCoPE project offers a quality benchmark and will provide much needed guidance for telehealth and telecare service providers, clinicians, carers, purchasers and other interested parties. Its responds to the increasing number of calls for such a quality benchmark that arise from increasing healthcare needs due to demographic changes and the imperative to adapt service frameworks to respond to those needs.

By establishing a quality benchmark the Code will help to improve the link between service providers and users. It will help increase the level of trust between the parties concerned.

It is envisaged that the Code will be adopted in European Union member states.

The Code sets benchmarks around such matters as data privacy, access to information, moral and ethical issues, staff and management etc. It will provide particular benefits for older and frail people, people with chronic conditions, cognitive, physical and sensory impairments (including dementia and learning disabilities), drug or alcohol dependency and/or mental health problems.

TeleSCoPE's objectives meet commitments within the EU Health Programme to:

- Improve the physical and mental well-being of European citizens;
- Harmonize the provision of health, and its knowledge in all the member states;
- Improve citizens' health security;
- Reduce health inequalities; and
- Generate and disseminate health information and knowledge.

Strategic Relevance and Contribution to the Public Health Programme

The project endorses its objectives concerned with:

- Improving citizens' health security;
- Promoting health, including the reduction in health inequalities; and
- Generating and disseminating health information and knowledge

For promoting health and addressing the preventative agenda there are growing numbers of telehealth services where the provision of technologies is complemented by approaches that support people in adopting better lifestyles (through, for instance, health coaching and/or rehabilitation work). Vital signs monitors additionally permit the identification of measures that can indicate changes in people's wellbeing and enable speedier (preventative or remedial) interventions.

For the generation and dissemination of health information and knowledge, we see an essential role of telehealth services as including, where needed, the education of patients/users. This perspective is, of course, the natural concomitant of services where providers and patients/users work in partnership with the latter informed, guided and motivated as appropriate.

Methods and Means

A robust, but simple, methodology is proposed.

Such robustness is absolutely necessary in view of the vulnerability of many potential beneficiaries of telehealth. The main components of the methodology relate explicitly to project Objectives.

These are as follows:

1. Gathering of the evidence base;

2. Developing the Code;
3. Validating the Code;
4. Publishing the Code; and
5. Establishing the prerequisites for mainstreaming the Code.

A precondition is the shared understandings of the sometimes confusing terms that are encountered (telemedicine, telehealth, telecare, eHealth, now extending to mHealth and uHealth, viz. mobile and ubiquitous health).

Outcomes

The main outcome is the establishment of a European Code of Practice for Telehealth Services. There are, however, a number of longer term (and less tangible) outcomes that relate to the regulation and growth of telehealth services.

These arise through:

1. The benefits to people's health (and their engagement in the economic and social lives of their communities);
2. Associated cost savings among all the governments of member states (through the ability to deliver healthcare services in better and less costly ways, better medication compliance, lower dependency, fewer unnecessary hospital admissions, etc.); and
3. Environmental benefits through lower energy consumption arising from fewer trips for patients, caregivers or service staff.

The project will create a strong EU network of organisations representing government interests of member states, manufacturers, supplier, academics, service providers and service users in the field of telehealth.

EC Contribution:

EUR 579,228.00

Duration:

36 month(s)

Keywords:

Benchmarking
Healthy Living
Service Standards
Telecare
Telehealth
Wellbeing