
E-Health Survey Shows Most Hospitals Online but Telemedicine Services not Fully Deployed



More than 90 percent of European hospitals are connected to broadband, 80 percent have electronic patient record systems, but only 4 percent of hospitals grant patients online access to their electronic records, according to the results of a survey conducted for the European Commission. European hospitals are more advanced than US hospitals in terms of external medical exchange, but they lag behind in using e-health to view laboratory reports or radiology images.

The survey provides useful data for the work of the EU eHealth Task Force on assessing the role of information and communications technologies (ICT) in health and social care, which is due to suggest ways for ICT to speed up innovation in healthcare to the benefit of patients, carers and the healthcare sector. The EU eHealth Task Force met for the first time in Budapest on 10th May on the margins of eHealth week (10-12 May). The deployment of eHealth technologies in Europe, with a view to improving the quality of healthcare, reducing medical costs and fostering independent living for those needing care, is a key objective of the Digital Agenda for Europe, which for example sets a 2015 deadline for giving patients online access to their medical data.

E-Health applications have a growing role in Europe's hospitals, according to the survey but there are still wide variations in take-up, with Nordic countries taking the lead. Large, public and university hospitals are generally more advanced in eHealth terms than smaller, private ones. The survey data was collected from 906 general public, private or university hospitals. The survey was carried out in 2010 in all 27 EU Member States, plus Croatia, Iceland, and Norway.

Encouraging E-Health Deployment in Hospitals

The survey shows that in general public, private and university hospitals in Europe are taking advantage of eHealth technologies to a greater or lesser extent:

- 92% are connected to broadband and 41% of them have broadband speed of at least 50Mbps
- 81% have one or more electronic patient records systems in place;
- 71% use online eBooking systems for patients' appointments with medical staff;
- 65% have a common patient record system and 61% have an IT-based archiving and communication system;
- 43% exchange radiology reports electronically; and
- 39% use videoconferencing (mainly for consultations between internal medical staff and external specialists).

More Services Required for Patients

The survey shows that services for patients, such as ePrescription, telemonitoring or access to patient records are not widely available in all EU hospitals:

- 54% have WiFi;
- 30% use ePrescription for medicines;
- Only 8% offer patients the opportunity to book their own hospital appointment online;
- 8% telemonitor patients at home;
- 5% have some form of electronic exchange of clinical care information with healthcare providers in other EU countries; and
- Only 4% grant patients online access to their electronic patient record.

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