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Videoconferencing Application to Improve the Quality of Service Given to Cancer Patients

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When a doctor diagnoses cancer, a "Multidisciplinary Oncological Consultation" is recommended and in some cases obligatory, in accordance with the oncological care programmes in Belgium. This entails a consultation between all the doctors concerned in the diagnosis. The AZ Maria Middelares hospital declares and treats some 1000 new cases of cancer every year.

In this consultation, the active involvement of the general practitioner (GP) is of crucial importance. Not only is he aware of the physical, psychical and social situation of the patient, he also plays a vital role in the communication with the patients and their family. However, recent figures from the National Institute for Health and Invalidity Insurance (INAMI/RIZIV) show that the GP is present in only 3.5% of the cases. The most important reason for this is that the GP loses a lot of precious time travelling to and from the hospital.

As a close cooperation with the GP is explicitly mentioned in the mission statement of AZ Maria Middelares, they have launched a project to allow GPs to participate in the Multidisciplinary Oncological Consultation via videoconferencing. Belgacom, the solution provider, installed a Tandberg 3000 MXP videoconferencing solution in a meeting room at the hospital, using a 42" monitor and a high definition camera. At the GP's end, no additional investment or operational cost is required as he can run the Tandberg software on his PC with a broadband connection.

During the encrypted connection, the GP can, not only conference with the team in the hospital, but also consult the medical file of the patient, including Imaging.

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