

Newsletter No. 5

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PrimCareIT



Special edition “Final Conference”: Round table discussion and presentations



Baltic Sea Region
Programme 2007–2013

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Dear Reader,



Welcome to the fifth – and final – issue of the PrimCareIT newsletter! This edition features the conference “Connecting health care professionals via ICT” which was held on 14th February 2014 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Work on eHealth issues will also continue after the project end. Our pilots have proven that tele-mentoring and tele-consultation provide benefits to the health care sector. Project partners are currently finalising a handbook with good practices for their large-scale implementation, and political statements supporting project findings are being prepared in partner countries. Further information on project activities can be found on www.primcareit.net.

Sami Perälä

Lead Partner

Conference in a nutshell

PrimCareIT project results were presented on 14th February 2014 in Tallinn, in the conference “Connecting Health Care Professionals via ICT. Tele-mentoring and tele-consultation in Primary Health Care”. This international event was attended by over 120 people.

The conference day was full of interesting topics. Guests were welcomed by the Deputy Secretary General on Health of Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, Ivi Normet, and project director Sami Perälä. This was followed by a video greeting from the Minister of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, Paula Risikko.

The conference’s goal was to introduce the results of the PrimCareIT project and to raise further discussion on the possibilities of tele-health in counteracting professional

isolation and brain drain in remote primary health care. During session II, “Tele-mentoring and tele-consultation – support for primary health care in remote areas”, political representatives from partner countries were invited to participate in a round table discussion on these important topics. You can read more about the round table discussion on page 3.

Sessions III and IV presented the findings of the project. Especially experiences from implementing tele-consultation and tele-mentoring in the pilot sites raised a lot of interest. Pilot leaders from Finland and Sweden pointed out the success factors such as motivation, technical equipment, and time line. All conference presentations and their recordings can be found on the conference website www.primcareit2014.net and on the project website www.primcareit.net.

Round table discussion with decision-makers

For the round table discussion, the “Connecting health care professionals via ICT”-conference got together decision makers and health care professionals from the Baltic Sea Region to discuss tele-mentoring and tele-consultation opportunities as well as health care possibilities. During the discussion, a strong support towards ICT solutions in health care became apparent, as it can be seen as a potential for saving costs. It also assures equal access to the health care services for people living in rural areas. “Tele-consultation and tele-mentoring as tools would help professionals to work in remote areas. Not only these would increase the motivation of the professionals, these also secure the patient treatment process” said Liudmila Zhilevich, Head of the Department of Primary Health Care, from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus.

Common political goal

Participants of the round table discussion confirmed that there is a strong political will to utilise eHealth applications but there are some major barriers for implementation. Eriks Mikitis, the Director of the Health Care Department at the Ministry of Health from Latvia emphasized that there are a lot of different aspects which need to be taken into account. “There is strong ideological support towards eHealth,

but we should not just concentrate on technical aspects. Embedding new technologies require complex processes of change in attitudes and in the whole patient service funnel.”

Major benefits of eHealth

Several Baltic Sea countries have national strategies for eHealth. Sweden, for example, has a so called first generation strategy, where they seek and test existing ICT services. The next step is to think, how to organise the structures of health care in the means of eHealth. There is increasing interest towards strategic development from the political decision-makers’ point of view, since the application of eHealth technologies would save time and money plus improve the quality of services. Not to mention that the patient would receive faster treatment and the specialised care would be equally accessed.

Adapting to change

Enthusiasm for the use of ICT in health care has, however, not always been admitted by uptake and utilization in practice. Professional



resistance to new technologies is seen as a great obstacle to progress. Finland and Estonia have been using ICT in health care actively for 15 years already, but from their experience can be learned that it takes time to change the attitude towards ICT. Other emphases are that financial issues should be covered, collaboration is needed, patients should be implemented into the process and possible new laws are required in some countries. In conclusion, all participants agreed that international collaboration, sharing of good experiences and best practices – as realised by the PrimCareIT project partners – are of significant importance.

Reasons and solutions against brain drain and professional isolation of health professionals and its effects on health care provision in remote primary care

Alfonas Vainoras, professor at the Sport Institute at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and senior researcher in the Human Health Institute

Professor Vainoras' presentation introduced the research work and presented the findings of the project phase. Based on literature review, expert interviews and focus group discussion, he described reasons for brain drain and professional isolation, effects they have on primary health care, and solutions for



them. The results are also available in the integrated transnational strategy paper created by the work group.

The strategic opportunities of tele-consultation and tele-mentoring for remote primary care

Peeter Ross, eHealth expert at Estonian E-Health Foundation

During his presentation, Professor Ross discussed the strategic opportunities for better professional communication via ICT in health care. He suggested that technology opens "totally new avenues for health and care" in a changing environment. The raising of awareness in several sectors such as medical education and the patient's view regarding the



opportunities of technology in health care communication can help to deal with current problems.

Stakeholder involvement

Johan Berglund, professor of Public Health at the Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden

Professor Berglund's presentation explained how political awareness on professional isolation, brain drain, and tele-health topics was raised by PrimCareIT. He introduced stakeholder analysis, dialogue, and events that were carried out during the project and described the main results, achievements, and challenges of the project, which are further acknowledged in political statements signed in partner countries.



Implementation of tele-consultation in pilots

Tobias Larsson, professor in Product Development at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden

Professor Larsson provided an overview of the tele-consultation work. Tele-consultation was implemented at pilot sites to overcome professional isolation in remote primary care. The work was started with a situation analysis and also needs, process, and legal assessment. Piloting took place in seven pilot sites which were also introduced. Conclusions were gathered in the best practices handbook and phrased as guidelines for large-scale implementation of tele-consultation.

Implementation of tele-mentoring in pilots

Kristjan Krass, online learning environment developer in the Estonian Society of Family Doctors

Kristjan Krass introduced the concept of tele-mentoring and described tele-mentoring pilot activities that were carried out within PrimCareIT in five pilot sites. The work consisted of similar steps as seen in tele-consultation; from pre-assessment to piloting and evaluation, resulting in the publication of guidelines for implementing tele-mentoring. Kristjan Krass pointed out that tele-mentoring was well accepted as a method at pilot sites. Although time and cost savings could be observed, a certain amount of money for the technical maintenance was required, too.

Lessons learned from pilot in Sweden: Tele-consultation between Blekinge Wound Centre and Primary Health Care

Tobias Larsson, professor in Product Development at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden

The presentation described the implementation process and lessons learned from the tele-consultation pilot in Blekinge Wound Centre in

Domantas Stundys,
Lithuania:

"I am participating in PrimCareIT because

'Move the data, not the patient' approach in health care seems to be as much efficient, convenient and cost-effective as Skype in everyday-use. Gigabit fibre internet and 3G network coverage in Lithuania is awesome. It's time to employ this infrastructure more."



Sweden. The presentation provided information on pilot participants' experiences as well as on findings regarding IT support, technology, and user involvement needs, concluding into overall lessons learned on implementing tele-consultation into ordinary work.

Lessons learned from pilots in Finland: Tele-consultation and tele-mentoring in Kauhava Primary Health Care District

Raimo Rintala, Senior Consultant, MD, Kauhava Primary Health Care District, Finland

Raimo Rintala presented a tele-consultation pilot case from Kauhava Primary Health Care District, Finland. His presentation started with an overview of the pilot background and implementation. He continued with pilot evaluation results and changes that occurred during the pilot. He also described lessons learned in technical adaptation, personnel's experiences, financial savings, and overall opportunities brought by tele-consultation and tele-mentoring implementation.

Lessons learned from data analysis of primary care professional's views

Giedrius Vanagas, Ph.D., MPH Professor of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences

Professor Vanagas provided an overview of the tele-mentoring topic and lessons learned during the tele-mentoring pilots. He started with describing the background idea, aims and methods of tele-mentoring implementation in pilot sites, introducing also the used evaluation methods. Professor Vanagas then presented the conclusions from the pilot evaluations, discussing the supporting and limiting factors of tele-mentoring, experienced problems, and impacts of professional isolation and brain drain.



Tobias Larsson, Sweden:
"I am participating in PrimCareIT because I

am romantic. I want to make the world better: Adding engineering to health care can make a big difference."

The Project Partners

Click for more information.

- South Ostrobothnia Health Care District
- Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences
- Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- Kauhava Primary Health Care District
- eHealth Institute, Linnaeus University
- Blekinge Institute of Technology
- County Council of Västerbotten
- Flensburg University of Applied Sciences
- The Estonian Society of Family Doctors
- Institute of Clinical Medicine of the Technomedicum of the Tallinn Technical University
- Vilnius University Hospital Santariškių Klinikos
- Kaunas University of Technology
- Lithuanian University of Health Sciences
- State Educational Institution Belarusian Medical Academy of Post-Graduate Education
- Ostrovec Central Regional Hospital
- National Health Service



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b+c computergraphik GmbH

Project goals at a glance

PrimCareIT – Connecting and supporting health care professionals via ICT

- ▶ Motivate health care professionals to work in rural areas
- ▶ Promote equal access to health services
- ▶ Implement virtual communication solutions
- ▶ Eliminate barriers of distance
- ▶ Foster sustainability of telemedicine



Flagship project

PrimCareIT was selected as a flagship project of the EU Strategy. These flagship projects contribute to maintaining and reinforcing the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region.

For more information please go to

www.primcareit.net