



The electronic patient record

Swiss Post actively developing eHealth in Switzerland

The health sector today calls for innovative forms of healthcare to ensure the Swiss population can access high-quality healthcare also in future. Support for the processes via electronic health data management, as offered by the electronic patient record, is a crucial success factor. With its progressive electronic solutions, its deep national roots and innovative strength, Swiss Post accepted the challenges provided by the eHealth concept right from the start, and it actively contributes to overcoming the hurdles encountered along the way. To this end, Swiss Post is supporting the introduction of an electronic patient record in Switzerland.

In 2007, the Confederation approved the "eHealth Strategy Switzerland". eHealth refers to the use of information and communication technologies to design, support and network all processes and stakeholders in the health sector.

eHealth Strategy Switzerland

The core element of the eHealth Strategy is the setting up of an electronic patient record that is managed in a decentralised manner. According to the intentions of the Federal Council, all persons resident in Switzerland are to have access to their individual patient record by 2015.

The electronic patient record networks doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories and nurses as well as other professionals in the healthcare sector and makes efficient communication and information management possible. Patients make relevant information about themselves available online to medical professionals of their choice, at any time and from anywhere. This promotes the self-determination of patients and more

secure and efficient treatment procedures in the health sector. In addition, errors incurred in the information transfer can be more easily avoided, thus improving the quality of care received.

Law on ePatient record

With the introduction of the Swiss Federal Law on the electronic patient record, a legal loophole is to be closed and the framework for the implementation of the eHealth Strategy to be defined. The Federal Council has mandated the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) to draw up a dispatch and draft legislation. These are expected by mid-2013.

The Federal Law on the electronic patient record is to regulate requirements for the secure handling of health information in the electronic patient record. The definition of technical specifications will also enable standardised data exchange at national level.

The role of Swiss Post

The confidential handling of data and information, sender and receiver identification, and the reliable and secure transmission of data and information are part of the core business of Swiss Post. As one of the most innovative postal organisations worldwide, Swiss Post tackled the digitisation of physical data traffic at an early stage in the health sector too.

Annually over 200 million documents related to the health system – ranging from accounts to medical data – are sent as physical mailings and safely delivered to their destination by Swiss Post. Swiss Post will continue to guarantee

the exchange of medical data, both for individual customers and for its customers within the health sector. It will do so by means of the electronic patient record "vivates", which patients can access by using access keys such as their SuisseID or health insurance card.

The Swiss Post electronic patient record

The Swiss Post electronic patient record "vivates" is much more than a platform on which to store medical data. It was developed in conjunction with the Canton of Geneva, takes the specific conditions in Switzerland into account and complies with international standards. Because it is a decentralised system, "vivates" also serves as a communications platform, which facilitates dialogue between various users.

"vivates" offers following advantages:

- For the first time, the patient has access to all his medical data and can decide who is allowed to see it and who is not. At the same time, the patient is safe in the knowledge that in the case of an emergency, all relevant data is readily available.
- Doctors gain insight into a patient's past treatment, laboratory analyses and medications and can therefore further improve the quality of their work.
- Using the electronic discharge documentation, hospitals are able to integrate referring physicians and home care in a timely manner, thus securing the opportunity to retrace the successful outcome of their interventions.
- Pharmacists gain a better insight into the treatment and are able to respond more specifically to patients' needs.
- For the first time, nursing staff are able to optimise treatment directly with the doctor based on the documentation to hand.

Data protection takes highest priority

The aim is a patient-centred view in order to provide all necessary information distributed across the entire healthcare process. Thereby, the data remains in the hands of professionals involved in the treatment. Only if the patient grants access, can the data be accessed, retrieved and processed further. This ensures that highest priority is accorded to the protection of sensitive data.

An authorisation plan jointly devised by the Confederation, the cantons and the Swiss Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) classifies the data into different categories of confidentiality, which ensures that only authorized users can view the data.

«e-toile» as pioneer project

In the Canton of Geneva, four Geneva communities began an electronic patient pilot project called “e-toile” in February 2011 in cooperation with Swiss Post.

Towards the end of 2011, the pilot project was evaluated on behalf of the coordinating body, eHealth Suisse, by the Bern University of Applied Sciences for Engineering and Information Technology and as an initial pilot scheme was singled out for the “Cross-regional – strategy-compliant – multiple municipalities 2011” award. This award confirmed that the Swiss Post solution complied in every respect with the eHealth Strategy Switzerland.

“e-toile” has been a pioneer project at European level too. As the first Swiss pilot project, “e-toile” was linked to epSOS (European Patients Smart Open Services). epSOS is an EU-wide project with the aim of making important health data available

in European healthcare facilities when required and with the consent of the patient. “e-toile” runs the “National Contact Point” on behalf of the Confederation, thus ensuring a connection between Switzerland and the EU.

Successful pilot project

When the pilot project closes, the aim is to expand the project to cover the whole of the Canton of Geneva.

With the successful implementation of the Geneva pilot project “e-toile”, Swiss Post has not only demonstrated both the technical and organisational feasibility of the electronic patient record. It was able to prove that it had the necessary know-how and technical expertise to carry out pioneering work and implement financially sustainable, innovative solutions in a highly complex sector.

Further pilot projects

The solution provided for the “e-toile” pilot project in Geneva will be offered under the name “vivates” for further pilot projects in other cantons. Other regions in Switzerland will benefit from the Geneva experience.

The Canton of Ticino for instance addresses the topic of eHealth within the “Rete sanitaria” initiative. A pilot scheme with cancer patients based on the electronic patient record “vivates” is set to start in spring 2013. The technical platform is identical to that of “e-toile” and therefore ensures a supra-regional interoperability as well as a common development in the future.

Swiss Post’s position

Right from the start, Swiss Post has been working in the field of eHealth and on establishing secure solutions for an electronic patient record. Today, it can rely on a solid foundation of knowledge and expertise that are unique in all of Switzerland. This enables Swiss Post to provide guidance to cantons and health professionals on a range of activities, from the design and implementation of pilot projects to the large-scale introduction of the electronic patient record.

It is not only public confidence in Swiss Post’s ability to transmit data and information reliably and securely, but also its extensive experience, which make Swiss Post eminently qualified to provide the health sector with electronic data management.

Swiss Post welcomes the Federal law on the electronic patient record. It considers a legal framework as an essential prerequisite to regulate the requirements for such a system and to create trust among patients. Data security and self-determination of the patient are crucial success factors.

Swiss Post is committed to continue the pursuit of these goals and advocates a rapid, high-quality implementation of eHealth in Switzerland.

Further information

www.swisspost.ch/politics
www.swisspost.ch/vivates