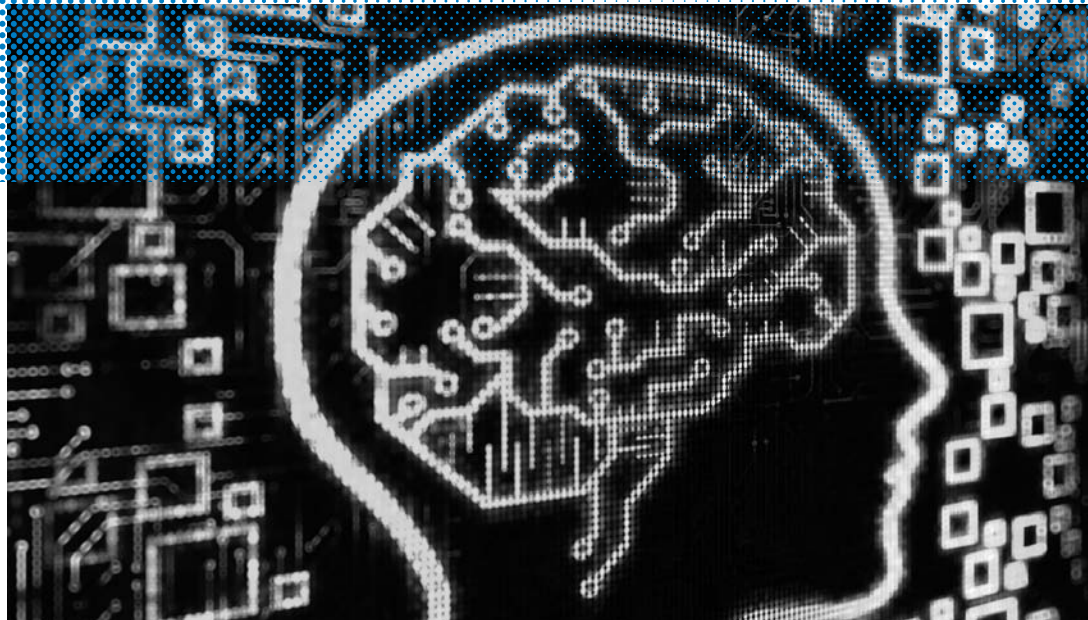


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Digitization in healthcare

2 Electronic patient record

In 2007 the Swiss government approved the "Swiss eHealth Strategy", which lays down the Swiss healthcare system's route towards a digital future. A key component of this strategy is the electronic patient record, which is to contain the patient's entire medical history and be accessible at all times. The electronic patient record has met with widespread approval and many cantons have already launched related projects. The framework law for implementing the record should be ready for submission by the end of 2012.

3 Support from the Internet

The Internet is a valuable medium for low-threshold, anonymous prevention and counselling services. But online support and advice is also available for smokers who wish to give up the habit. This issue of spectra highlights Web portals that deal with the topics of alcohol at the workplace and children from families with a history of alcohol abuse, and summarises the most important findings of a study of websites aimed at people who want to quit smoking.

4 Snow Control

Two lines at the party on Saturday, but stay clean till then. This could be the week's target for a cocaine user who has signed up to "Snow Control", a six-week, Web-based course on self-managed cocaine use. The aim is to make users aware of their consumption habits, initiate sustainable changes in small steps and reduce, or if possible stop, consumption according to a schedule of the user's own devising.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

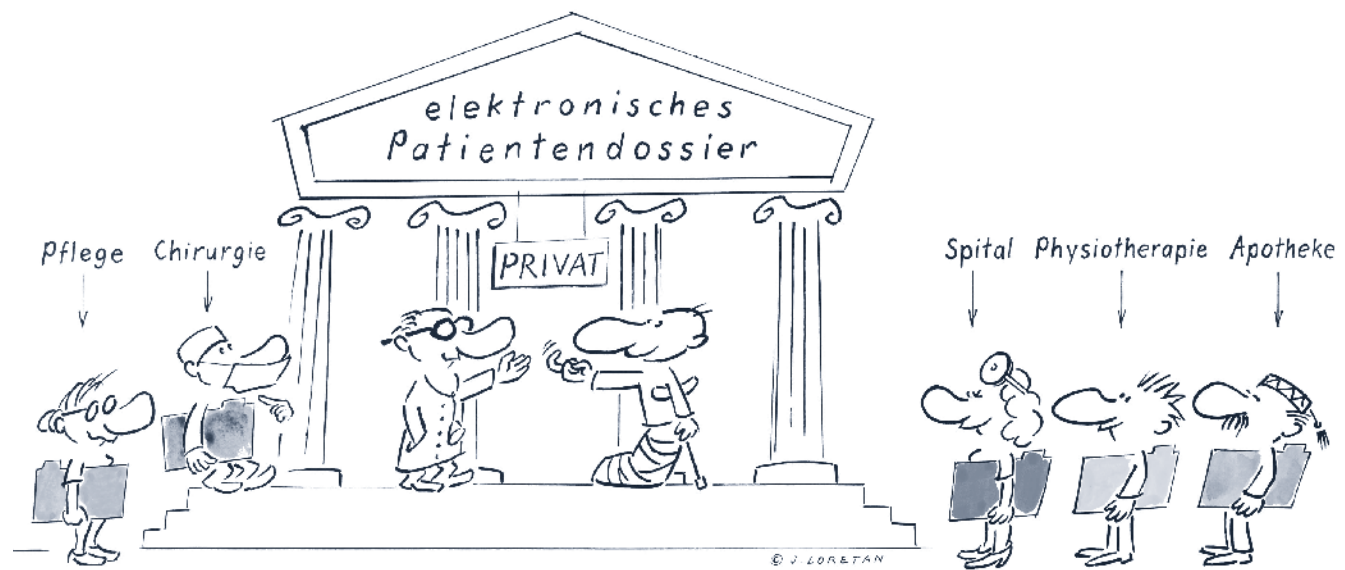
Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

The electronic patient record: coming soon?

eHealth. The electronic patient record offers many advantages: better coordination, better quality of treatment, greater patient safety and greater efficiency in the health-care system. The Swiss government is promoting and regulating the introduction and dissemination of the electronic patient record in the framework of its "Swiss eHealth Strategy". Nine cantons have already launched corresponding projects. Work is currently in progress on drawing up the legal framework for this new tool.

X-ray images at the family doctor's practice, ultrasound images at the gynecologist's, lab results at the hospital: the health records of patients in Switzerland are currently spread over many different locations and often available only in physical form. This is to change with the introduction of the electronic patient record, which will enable treatment-related documentation (for instance x-ray images, surgical reports, lab data, etc.) to be made available to other healthcare professionals provided the patients give their consent. Thus, authorised healthcare professionals, i.e. physicians, pharmacists and physiotherapists, but also Spitex (home care services) staff, will have access to their patients' treatment-related data independently of time and location. The advantages of the measure are obvious: it avoids unnecessary duplication of investigations, it ensures that the doctors treating a patient are more effectively networked and save time in making a more precise diagnosis, and it improves the quality of treatment. Above all, patients benefit from the greater safety it confers: for instance, it enables doctors whom they do not yet know to familiarise themselves rapidly and comprehensively with their case, including, for instance, any allergies or hypersensitivity. This reduces the occurrence of incorrect



Electronic patient records bring together health data from every possible source.

Illustration: Josef Loretan

treatment and complications and can, in an emergency, save lives.

Preliminary draft of the framework law

The introduction of the electronic patient record is a key component of the Swiss eHealth Strategy approved in 2007. This strategy lays down the procedure for promoting the use of information and communication technology in the healthcare system. In December 2010, the Swiss government mandated the Federal Department of Home Affairs (DHA) with the task of drawing up the legal basis for the introduction, dissemination and further development of an electronic patient record. This preliminary draft was submitted by the federal council to all interested parties for their comments in a consultation exercise lasting from September to December 2011.

Self-determination and data security

Voluntary participation, patient self-determination and a guarantee of data security are key points in the preliminary draft. Thus every individual will decide whether or not they want to have an electronic patient record compiled. The patients who do will retain full ownership of the data, and will have the sole authority to decide who may access data and which data that will be. In addition, the inclusion of data in the electronic patient record requires the patient's prior consent.

To ensure that sensitive data can be securely incorporated and accessed, all the participating healthcare professionals and their systems must satisfy minimum requirements; in particular, they must meet certain technical and organisational standards and norms. Compliance with these conditions is to be safeguarded by means of a certification procedure. The possibility of passing on data to health insurers is not envisaged. The new law will have no effect on existing federal and cantonal regulations governing the handling of patient data.

Broad agreement

The preliminary draft met with the approval of three quarters of participants in the consultation exercise. They agree entirely with the thrust and goals of the preliminary draft of the law on the electronic patient record. They regard the framework law as being to the point, focused on essentials and technology-neutral. However, there was criticism of the proposal to use the new national insurance number as an element for identifying patients. In addition, fears were expressed about the technical implementation and there were complaints about the absence of incentives such as cost-related measures.

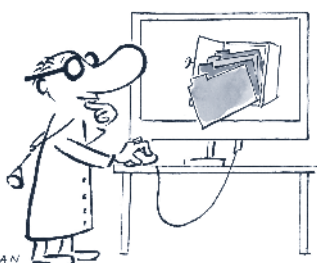
Draft of the law

The preliminary draft is currently being reviewed to take feedback from the consultation exercise into account and is to be submitted to parliament in the first quarter of 2013. In particular, alternatives to the national insurance number (AHVN13) as an identifier are being examined. In addition, the extent to which incentives for promoting the electronic patient record can be enshrined in law are being investigated. The Swiss government is cooperating closely with the cantons to promote and coordinate the

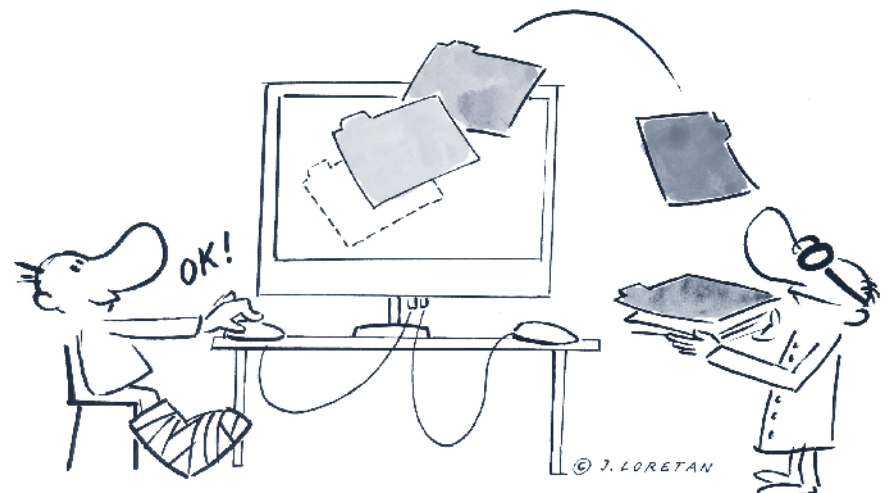
introduction, dissemination and further development of the electronic patient record. The coordination tasks have been taken over by "eHealth Suisse", the federal and cantonal coordination body set up for this purpose.

Further information:
www.bag.admin.ch > Themen
 > Gesundheitspolitik > eHealth

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Healthcare professionals can access patients' data in an emergency.



Patients can control access to their data on an individual basis.

eHealth improves quality of care: dream or reality?

eHealth. The Swiss eHealth Strategy is designed to improve the safety and quality of the Swiss healthcare system by linking up all the relevant players and their IT systems with each other and enabling them to access patient data whenever it is needed. For patients this means: "My healthcare data. Available whenever and wherever it is required."

People are becoming increasingly mobile, moving their homes, switching to another health insurer and/or family doctor, or travelling abroad. As a result, when they require medical treatment, essential medical data of their health status may often be entirely missing or have to be collected time-consumingly. The electronic interlinking can do a great deal to improve the availability of the right data just when it is needed. The term "eHealth" covers a wide range of electronic applications and services used in the healthcare system. They support procedures and communication and link up the different players – patients, doctors, therapists, insurers, laboratories, pharmacies, hospitals, nurses, etc.

The aim of eHealth is to interconnect the many different players and their IT systems and enable the usage of the vast amount of data in the treatment process which are currently available on paper or already in electronic form. The cross-organisational electronic patient record (see article on page 5) shall enable that in the near future. A further cornerstone of eHealth is the digital workflow support of care processes to improve the safety and quality of care and also stabilise costs in the long term. For patients all this means: "My healthcare data. Available whenever and wherever it is required."

Potentials for quality improvements

Some practical examples will illustrate the system's potential for improving quality, bearing in mind that, for the diverse players involved, different aspects of data sharing offer different benefits in terms of quality. For patients, for instance, better information quality and data security means



more self-determination and self-responsibility. They can help manage their treatment by using digital resources such as internet searches or exchanges of information with comparable patients in online forums. The access to the data stored in the electronic patient record enables healthcare professionals whom they trust to access all relevant medical data. With all the essential data at hand, the healthcare professionals can make optimum decisions on diagnosis and treatment.

For the work of the healthcare professionals, on the other hand, facilitated data sharing with colleagues is a significant improvement.

Benefits of telehealth

eHealth can be used to overcome barriers of time and location. This aspect of eHealth is also called "telehealth". Teleradiology, for instance, allows to assess radiological patient images without the expert to be at the patient's location. Telemedicine, on the other hand, enables patient vitals to be measured at home and transmitted directly to the healthcare professional. Therefore patients can, for instance, be discharged earlier from hospital without sacrificing the high standard of care by the healthcare professional.

In integrated healthcare models, eHealth enables the treatment of chronically ill long-term patients to be coordinated more effectively: electronic applications support interdisciplinary communication on the one hand and in-

tegration of patients and their families on the other. Individually adapted treatment plans can be managed and assessed digitally, also in palliative medicine for instance.

Digital documentation and availability of medical data can be used on a cross-organisational and cross-patient basis in order to compile large bodies of data, for instance for research purposes. With regard to general healthcare provision, these collections of anonymised data can enable significant conclusions to be drawn regarding the identification and course of infections such as measles, influenza, etc. Data of relevance to the investigation and assessment of widespread diseases such as diabetes or cardiovascular conditions can be evaluated more effectively if available in electronic form. Evidence-based medicine can also benefit from such databases.

Who owns the health records?

Among the risks associated with eHealth, data protection and data security requires particular attention. The patient should own their own health data at all times and they should be fully informed on when, how and which data is used. This means that adequate organisational and technical measures have to be in place. In addition, all the players involved must bear in mind that technical resources also have their limitations and may, for instance, break down. In other words, they must also ensure a minimum level of care without eHealth.

Better quality of treatment, more data for research and prevention

Concrete improvements of care through optimized data processing and data sharing is unquestioned. In particular, when the treatment process involves several players, the current reality of telehealth and integrated care already demonstrates considerable potential for the improvements in quality that eHealth can achieve.

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At first hand

Our healthcare system is facing a range of different challenges, for instance the need to continue securing high-quality yet affordable healthcare provision for the entire population against a backdrop of steadily expanding medical options and growing care requirements of an ageing population. Increased cooperation between different healthcare professionals generates innovative approaches to problem-solving, a development in which the rapid availability of diagnostic and therapeutic data is of great importance. The cornerstone of efficient and secure data sharing is the digital recording, storage and transmission of medical data. Digitisation in the healthcare system also creates new opportunities for patients: electronic access to data on diseases and treatment improves their health skills and increases their active involvement in diagnostic and treatment-related decision-making.

The concept of "eHealth" applies to a range of IT applications that support, improve and change patient care. These applications are already an integral part of the healthcare systems of many countries. By comparison, Swiss healthcare has been slow to adopt the widespread use of these technologies, for instance data sharing, not only by family doctors, specialists and other healthcare professionals but also by hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories and radiological facilities. This is all the more surprising given that rapid and reliable availability of health-related data not only improves treatment, it can also save lives.

The Swiss eHealth Strategy drawn up jointly by the federal government and the cantons aims to promote the use of IT applications in the healthcare system. Comprehensive technical, legal and organisational conditions and regulations having been defined in the new legal framework for the electronic patient record, which means that the prerequisites for digital recording and storage of medical data and for sharing them with other involved healthcare professionals. The FOPH is thus making a major contribution towards improving patient safety, the quality of treatment and the efficiency of the healthcare system.



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www.spectra.bag.admin.ch

Alcohol prevention, e.g. in the workplace or for families

Projects of the National Programme Alcohol. Within the framework of the National Programme Alcohol a total of twenty alcohol prevention projects financed or co-financed by the federal government have been realised or initiated in the last one and a half years in. Some of them focus on alcohol consumption in the workplace and on protecting the children of alcoholic parents. This issue of spectra outlines three of the projects.

In addition to causing considerable personal suffering, alcohol abuse costs the work environment a great deal of money. According to a 2011 study by the Federal Office of Public Health, excessive alcohol consumption costs Swiss employers approximately one billion francs a year. This breaks down to some 14,000 francs per employee affected. Productivity losses account for 83% of this sum, absences for 13% and accidents for 4%. Alcohol prevention and intervention activities in the workplace are an investment in the well-being and performance of employees. Prevention and intervention measures focused on the work setting, for instance those offered by the Blue Cross and Addiction Switzerland (Swiss non-profit prevention organisation), are in demand.

Five-part prevention package

With its "Alcohol in the Workplace" project, the Blue Cross offers employers five modules for alcohol prevention and intervention activities in their companies:

1. On-site presentations: Specialists talk about alcohol abuse and thus help break down the taboos surrounding it. Focus, content and length of the presentations are tailored to each company's individual requirements.
2. Training for employees: Using theory, film clips, group work and discussion sessions, the topic of alcohol abuse is addressed in depth



- and possible actions are highlighted.
3. Coaching for supervisors: Support ranging from short telephone counselling to coaching sessions on how to handle employees with alcohol problems.
4. QuickCheck: Calculation and estimation of costs incurred in the workplace as a result of addiction.
5. Health management: Drawing up a clear and pragmatic approach to dealing appropriately with substance abuse in the workplace.

A working group, comprising representatives of the Blue Cross, SECO (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs), the FOPH, the Federation of SME and other organisations has convened a "National Dialogue Day on Alcohol in the Workplace" for 9 November 2012. A free hotline is available for employers and managers to obtain answers to questions on the topic of alcohol in the workplace.

Links: www.blaueskreuzbern.ch
www.blaueskreuzbasel.ch
www.blaueskreuzzuerich.ch
www.croix-bleu.ch

Interactive training tool for executives

In cooperation with the Blue Cross, Ad-

diction Switzerland is implementing a novel interactive training scheme that supports executives in dealing with alcoholic colleagues. The tool essentially consists of a film, wherein actors perform scenes actors from situations commonly encountered in the context of alcohol abuse. The film is stopped at a critical point in the story. The viewers have to decide how they would behave in the situation portrayed. They can choose from three options. If they choose the right one, the film continues. If they choose the wrong ones, they are told why the chosen behaviour is counterproductive. All the scenes are supplemented with commentaries from specialists and further information. The tool is a new addition to the services offered on the www.alkoholamarbeitsplatz.ch website, a portal that already provides companies with information on the topic. The new tool is available in German and French from September 2012.

Link: www.alkoholamarbeitsplatz.ch

Forum for children from families with an alcohol problem

Several tens of thousands of children in Switzerland live with at least one alcoholic parent. About a third of them de-

velop an addiction or are at serious risk of suffering from mental disorders such as anxiety or depression. Addiction Switzerland has set up a website for children and young people from families with a history of alcohol problems. Besides information on addiction and alcohol, it provides them with an opportunity to chat in a forum with others similarly affected and to put questions to experts. This project of Addiction Switzerland helps affected children and young people to strengthen their protective and resilience factors and develop an autonomous, healthy personality.

Links: www.mamatrinkt.ch
www.papatrinkt.ch

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Central funding unit for alcohol prevention proposals

The federal government supports institutions, projects and research proposals that are dedicated to combating alcohol abuse. The framework for funding alcohol prevention projects is the National Programme Alcohol and the Federal Law on Spirits (Art. 43a BV; SR 680). Federal funding is awarded by a central unit on a systematic, coherent and transparent basis. The proposals submitted are examined by an expert commission for their relevance and likely preventive effect. The deadline for submissions for 2013 is 30 September 2012.

Link: www.bag.admin.ch
> Themen > Drogen

Online self-management course for cocaine users

"Snow Control": the online Snow Control course helps cocaine users in their efforts to reduce their intake – or to achieve abstinence.

Either abstinence or nothing: such all-or-nothing thinking has long since given way to more differentiated target-setting in many areas of addiction treatment. Therapies such as heroin-assisted treatment (HAT) or substitution programmes (e.g. with methadone) are cases in point. Their initial aims are harm reduction and stabilisation. The decision on whether abstinence should be the next goal is made on a case-by-case basis. Besides managed treatments, programmes are now available that are based entirely on self-management. The "Berner Gesundheit" (Bernese Health) Foundation, for instance, offers a

programme on controlling alcohol consumption. Another programme, "Realize it", involves cannabis users managing their intake themselves. Now, with "Snow Control", an online course is available in which cocaine users themselves control their consumption of the drug.

Six-week online course

Snow Control essentially pursues the same goal as other self-management programmes in the field of substance abuse: achieving disciplined, planned and limited use of the substance. Those interested can sign up for a six-week, web-based course at www.snowcontrol.ch. They have to define their cocaine consumption targets on a week-by-week basis. With the help of a diary of cocaine use and graphic illustrations, one mouse click shows them whether or not they have met their target. This raises the

participants' awareness of their drug use. To intensify their engagement with the drug and their own behaviour, they work their way through eight modules concerned with topics such as risk situations, setbacks, cravings or stress situations. This process enables them to strengthen their motivation to bring about change and helps them to develop the self-management skills they need in order to reduce their cocaine use or achieve abstinence.

Funded, free of charge and anonymous

Snow Control is a project run by ARUD Zurich (Centres for Addiction Medicine) and ISGF (Swiss Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction) in Zurich. It is a self-help programme based on scientifically sound approaches used in cognitive behavioural therapy and on

self-management principles and the relapse-prevention model. The course is free of charge and anonymous: participants are not required to enter any personal data, all course data are stored on security servers and accounts are password-protected.

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Managed substance use: links on the topic
Cocaine: www.snowcontrol.ch
Cannabis: www.realize-it.ch
Illegal drugs in general:
www.kiss-heidelberg.de
Alcohol: www.kontrolliertes-trinken.de
and www.bernergesundheits.ch
> Alkohol > Beratung und Therapie
> Kontrolliertes Trinken