

TeleSCoPE - Telehealth Services Code of Practice for Europe

Executive summary

TeleSCoPE directly responds to the European Commission COM2008:689 on telemedicine for the benefit of patients, healthcare systems and society. The primary objective of TeleSCoPE is to develop a comprehensive Code of Practice for Telehealth Services (i.e. relating to that aspect of telemedicine delivered in the home and normally mediated through ICT). The project directly supports EC Action Point (in COM2008:689) to ‘improve confidence in and acceptance of telemedicine’. It also contributes to the Action Points to collect ‘good practice on deployment of telemedicine services’ and the addressing of issues (requiring for Member States) around accreditation, privacy and data protection.

In more general terms, TeleSCoPE will, through establishing service standards, help establish relationships of trust between patients and providers and contribute to overall health and well-being. The standards will provide a quality benchmark for service regulation in member states. Other standards including technical (including interoperability) and information (privacy, etc.) will be referenced.

The strategic relevance relates to the fit with EU initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, healthy workforce and healthy life-years, social inclusion and engagement, economic and social development, ICT application and the co-ordination of policies and programmes within member states. The context includes i2020, the Ageing Well platform, the eHealth Action Plan, the Green Paper COM2008:725 on a European Workforce for Health.

With regard to the ‘Together for Health’ programme, TeleSCoPE contributes to a number of parameters, but most especially to health promotion and the reduction of health inequalities; increasing healthy life years and promoting healthy ageing. With regard to interoperability it complements work of CEN/CENELEC/ETSI in M403 and TC251 on Health Informatics (e.g. in WG2 regarding health records, data use, etc.).

In involving a range of partners with skills and experience, the Code will address aspects of service delivery relating to different configurations; kinds of providers and commissioners; and user (patient) groups. It recognises the role of health and allied professionals (including OTs, health coaches, pharmacists, telecare staff) in the delivery of telehealth services. It recognises beneficiaries – from older and frail people to people with chronic conditions, cognitive, physical and sensory impairments (including dementia and learning disabilities) and/or mental health problems. This range now extends to include lifestyle ‘challenges’ arising from diabetes or obesity to drug and alcohol dependency. Linked with all are issues of medication compliance.

Roles for partners are assigned in relation to their knowledge and expertise. Some work will involve visioning the shape of services as facilitated by the use of new technologies. Attention will be given to the implications of video communication; the application of RFID and AIDC (automatic identity and data capture) technologies; services delivered via mobile networks; the implications of worn, carried or implanted devices; tags and smart fabrics and dressings; robotics; and the way that services facilitate health and lifestyle coaching.

The primary means of developing the Code will be through desk-based work, research and consultations with key stakeholders (including government agencies and users (patients)). Governments and appropriate agencies within all member states will be engaged with and their involvement in key fora facilitated. Work with users will be more localised (in some five member states) but will involve the range of patient groups noted above.

The main output will be the Code of Practice itself and a blueprint to facilitate its adoption. The main outcome will follow in adoption of the Code and its use within member states to underpin service frameworks that contribute to the well-being of EU citizens.