Abstract Title:

eHealth: A Public Health Perspective

First author:

Mr Gerd Xuereb

Other Authors:

Dr. Kurt Apap

Abstract

Introduction & Problem

Electronic Health (eHealth) is the use of digital tools and services for health and is the future of medicine. eHealth connects preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative aspects of care and improves patient safety by limiting medical errors.

Medical students and professionals around Europe are not being educated about the importance of eHealth. In a study conducted at the start of the project, 88% of medical faculties around Europe did not include eHealth in the medical curriculum. This leads to lack of awareness, lack of trust and various misconceptions about eHealth in Medicine. Furthermore, when considering the benefits of eHealth, the role of healthcare students and professionals is also to educate the general population and to advocate for the implementation of eHealth tools.

Methods

Information about medical education on eHealth was gathered from European medical faculties and a literature review conducted. A policy paper with a number of recommendations to tackle the problem was adopted. A number of stakeholder events on a European level were attended and the views of medical students shared. Finally, through a series of online and face-to-face meetings, medical students from different European faculties were educated about eHealth and its importance in Public Health & medicine in general.

Results, Effects & Lessons

The activities & efforts resulted in the:

- increased awareness about eHealth in students from over a 100 medical faculties across Europe,

- increased advocacy on a European level through the joining of the European Commission's Stakeholder group on eHealth,

- increased promotion of eHealth among patients through a number of educational campaigns in 14 different European countries,

- realisation of advocacy programs in local medical faculties that promote the implementation of eHealth literacy courses as part of the medical curriculum.

86% of medical students feel that eHealth is important for improving the quality and consistency of healthcare and would like to have further opportunities to learn how eHealth can improve healthcare. The policy study has shown that as future healthcare professionals, medical students can be very important contributors in promoting eHealth.

Conclusion

Through eHealth the focus in medicine shifts to health promotion, education and prevention. eHealth will make medicine more available to everyone. It is a great tool for promoting public health, especially when dealing with sensitive topics such as sexual health. By directing our efforts and including medical students, the shift to eHealth practices in medicine can be more effective.