Diagnosis on telehealth situation – El Salvador

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COMPONENT 1: STANDARDS

■ Does the country have a national policy for standards for the Communication Technology and Health Informatics areas (Health Informatics and Telehealth)? If yes, does it have any internet site? Which are the standards on Health Informatics and Telehealth used in the country? Which are the needs for Telehealth standards in the country?

No.

■ Does the country take part in International groups/studies of standard producing organizations (ISO/TC215 Health Informatics, HL7, DICOM, IEC, IEEE)? Is participation individual or at the government level?

No.

■ Which is the government or civil institution belonging to the national system of standardization and also recognized by ISO?

The National Science and Technology Board (CONACYT).

■ Is this institution also organized to produce standards on health informatics and telehealth?

No, its participation has been limited to information technology standards, Management and quality assurance and tourism. http://www.iso.org/iso/about/iso_members/iso_member_body.htm?member_id=308796.

■ Which is the role of the Ministry of Health in the country regarding standardization? Is its role more of a regulator using standards produced nationally and internationally by other institutions or is it also the producer of technical standards? How is the Ministry of Health currently organized regarding health informatics and telehealth issues? Please explain.

The Ministry of Health is the governing entity of the Health System and therefore it has the capability of developing and implementing all types of technical standards applicable to its sphere of activity. In order to produce the health informatics/telehealth standards, a joint work will be carried out between the Regulation Office and the Information and Communication Technologies Office (DTIC), in coordination with the ISSS and the Public University, the Vice-Ministry of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Education.

■ Technical standards production processes follow an open building process with the participation of producers, consumers and neutral groups (universities and government)? Please describe.

Production of Technical Standards is generally coordinated by the Regulation Office and the organism responsible or interested in its application. Staff from other public sector entities normally work on their preparation (mainly the Social Security Institute of El Salvador (ISSS) and the Higher Board of Public Health (CSSP), as private entity, and the University of El Salvador and others representing the educational sector. This implies a validation process of technical levels and the approval by the Authority, represented by the Health Minister.

COMPONENT 2: MANAGEMENT OF TELEHEALTH PROJECTS

- Is there any national or state/department-level telehealth Project in the structured public setting?

There is not a systematic telehealth project and experiences are limited to the use of communication technology among different provision levels through mobile telephone services to coordinate inter-consultation processes related to case referral needing hospitalization. Other experiences may eventually subscribe to the use of communication via skype with private initiatives between professionals for interconsultations and for human resources training purposes in the case of Eluminate, although to a lesser extent due to the required technological infrastructure.

In fact, within the health reform context and with the functional shape of the integrated networks of healthcare services, the infrastructure development for telehealth may be an important modernization project in managing new healthcare models including the possibility of reforming regulations that will rule clinical transactions electronically (records, lab exams, interconsultations, training).

- Are there any municipal or university level initiatives related to telehealth that would enable the country to experiment telehealth projects? Are these initiatives public, private or mixed?

Initiatives related to telehealth at the local level are not known, although there are increasingly more frequent experiences of virtual courses for training healthcare professionals at Universities and Health Institutions. On the other hand, we can mention communication projects related to health through community radio and TV stations that dedicate time to HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

- Is there any regulation related to the professional exercise of telehealth at professional boards in the healthcare area?

There are not any policies or regulations related to the professional exercise of telehealth. Also, professional association in the medical profession does not exist in the country.

- Is there any remuneration policy for procedures or actions related to telehealth?

There is not any remuneration policy for procedures or actions related to telehealth. In the private sector the Higher Board on Public Health cancelled a business initiative that sold prepaid phone cards for medical consultations by phone. This was due to the lack of evidences in the relationship between clinicians and users. The legal framework for the professional exercise of medicine requests physical clinical records for legal judicial purposes, with regard to the users of medical services.

- Are there any national, state or local assessment projects of the implemented experiences?

There isn't any information on this topic.

COMPONENT 3: STRATEGIES FOR THE USE OF TELEHEALTH IN THE PROMOTION, PREVENTION AND OFFER OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES

- Assess the initiatives of your country, regarding healthcare services offer through telehealth resources as being: non existent, planned, executed, installed and advanced. Comments.

There is not any initiative at the moment. There used to be the *Canal Salud* (Health Channel) tool, an instrument financed and technically supported by the Pan-American Health Organization, where health related topics were developed via web, like videoconferences, linked with the participation of staff from the different Regions of the country and Health Resource Training Institutions (University of El Salvador and private universities).

- Assess the initiatives in your country, health prevention and/or promotion through telehealth resources as being: non existent, planned, executed, installed and advanced. Comments.

There isn't any. Instead, there is a deep wish for having a resource like this. With a tool like telehealth in the health promotion field, work can be done with the people from Family Health Community Teams – (ECOS *Familiares*), talks would be organized with the different Authorities at the Ministry of Health, spaces will be made available to disseminate the research schedule for the country, with different healthcare alignments, among others. The first stage of the Health Reform demands this.

- With regard to the number of initiatives already described and having into account the level of telehealth development in the country, please describe the key success factors and the difficulties found.

One success factor is cost reduction for human resources, since they had to travel for several hours to go to the meetings. Similarly, this people who do not travel serve users effectively. Information provided would be very truthful and timely.

Lack of training on computing for human resources appears as one of the difficulties found, as well as not having the adequate material and equipments for the necessary links via web.

COMPONENT 4: STRATEGY FOR A RESEARCH NETWORK ON TELEHEALTH RELATED TOPICS

▪ Are there health institutions that practice Videoconferencing sessions (IP, H323)? If yes, which? Classify the initiatives on this as: non existent, planning, put into operation, advanced or not applicable.

Censalud-Magisterio has a place and equipment being installed at this moment – this process depends on fund transfer already approved by El Salvador University Central (UES) for videoconferencing. Once it is ready it will provide service to MSPAS, central UES at the University Presidency level with a permanent videoconferencing offer through request and program planning. *Consejo de Investigaciones Cientificas de la* UES (CIC UES) has installed capacity and it is already carrying out sessions. In addition it has approximately 40-50 editions for TV of research studies, about 10 of them at least are related to health. Also, discussion forums can be made via videoconferences.

CIES (El Salvador Chapter) is already working on this.

Although the service has been used more at an academic level, it can also be used for research. I suggest starting with a national effort on Kidney Disease, since there are two recent research studies: NEFROLEMPA, MSPAS and Chronic Kidney Failure, group from the Department. UES at the Multi-Disciplinary School of Orient.

▪ Are there any health institutions that carry out webconference sessions? If yes, please state which ones. Classify the initiatives on this regard as: non existent, planning, put into operation and advanced or not applicable.

At the moment only the Scientific Research Board at UES, CENSALUD AND CIES, the latter offers Master's and Graduate Degrees in Public Health

▪ Which health related topics are being treated today in virtual sessions by Health Researching Groups? Will topics like surgery, for example, be adequate for virtual sessions? Classify the initiatives on this regard as: non existent, planning, implementation, put into operation, advanced or not applicable

I am not aware of this issue. According to Health Research Agenda, I would suggest to prioritize research on: Kidney Disease related to the following: social-economic mapping of El Salvador taking into account working, land condition, agriculture, productive aspects; Chagas: characterization and vector development, serologic evolution in affected cases, treated or not and Dengue: characterization and vector development. We should start with whatever we have in order to start building a national strategy for a multiple participation approach.

▪ Is there a National Project, such as the University Telemedicine Network in Brazil, integrating University and Teaching Hospitals, universities and health research and educational institutions? How do they practice their integration? If there is any, please state which. Classify the initiatives on this regard as: non existent, planning, implementation, put into operation, and advanced or not applicable.

It does not exist, there is not integration. I believe we should combine continuous education with research through videoconferences, in order to move it forward

COMPONENT 5: TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION COURSE OF TRAINING MATERIAL

▪ Are there any telehealth modules in undergraduate or graduate health related degrees at the main universities in your country? Which?

Virtual education is not yet guaranteed by the Higher Education Law, although there are some efforts at the University of El Salvador and a Master's Degree on Hospital Management has been prepared with virtual format. In addition, at the moment the Ministry of Health is offering a course on Hospital Management, developed by the School of Public Health from Andalucia. There is also access to several virtual training courses on the virtual field of Public Health at PAHO and the Evangelical University of El Salvador offers on line courses.

▪ On the context of healthcare services, are there structured training courses on telehealth? Which ones are them and which institutions produce them?

a. Training Course on Hospital Management, School of Public Health from Andalucia;

b. PAHO /WHO courses, virtual field on Pubic Health PAHO;

c. Professional Associations have agreements with other countries for virtual courses, EJM Nurse Association of El Salvador is currently preparing a platform for this type of courses;

d. The Ethics Committee at a national level and its network of hospital committees has accessed virtual courses on this field on the area of Ethics of Research and Bioethics.

■ Are there content certification processes related to health topics disseminated through the structure of tele-health government projects? How is it done?

At the moment each institution from the ones mentioned above offers them with academic credits. The Education Law established face to face education

■ Is there any teaching institution working with 3D organic modeling, animations in courses for healthcare professionals?

Not known.