

KNMG and eHealth

The Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) believes that eHealth can make care more efficient, more accessible, faster, more patient-friendly and of better quality, and can promote self-management by patients. eHealth has a long way to go before it becomes an integral and ingrained part of healthcare in the Netherlands. The regular embedding of eHealth in the care system requires a proactive approach. One of the barriers is unfamiliarity on the part of care professionals and patients. The KNMG is working to ensure that doctors are willing and able to use eHealth in their day-to-day healthcare practice. To achieve this, we need to answer questions such as: what eHealth applications are patients and physicians genuinely interested in? How effective and efficient are these applications? How can we encourage users to accept and apply these new communication methods?

Dutch National Implementation Agenda for eHealth (NIA)

The KNMG physicians' federation created the Dutch National Implementation Agenda for eHealth (NIA) in June 2012 in collaboration with the Netherlands Association of Health Care Insurers (ZN) and the Federation of Patients and Consumer Organisations in the Netherlands (NPCF). The NIA is designed to stimulate the development and introduction of eHealth/telemedicine applications, to promote research into promising applications and to introduce synergy and priorities to the many initiatives in this field.

In 2013, the NIA parties worked together with the National IT Institute for Healthcare (Nictiz), the National Health Care Institute (Zorginstituut Nederland) and the Association of Care Providers for Care Communication (VZVZ) to draw up a joint covenant in which the parties laid down agreements to eliminate obstacles surrounding financing, standardisation, knowledge and management. The eHealth Governance Covenant is now ready and has been signed by the parties. Its aim is to improve the practical implementation of eHealth applications. The Code of Conduct for Electronic Patient Data Exchange in Healthcare and the Guideline for Electronic Prescribing, published by the KNMG in collaboration with other parties, also help to ensure the efficient electronic exchange of data and the provision of high-quality care.

Obstacles to introduction

Obstacles to the broad introduction of eHealth applications include a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of care providers and patients, lack of research into (and evidence of) the efficacy and efficiency of eHealth applications, insufficient guarantees of proper financing, insufficient standardisation and a lack of cooperation in the development and introduction of promising applications.

Priorities for the KNMG

The KNMG is working with its partners to achieve the following objectives:

- The use of education and further training to create “awareness” and to impart knowledge and skills to current and future physicians and specialists in relation to eHealth and specific applications.
- The provision of electronic care support by means of a medical core data set, integrated care support and decision support, with the aid of integrated expert systems.
- Support for the safe use of eHealth applications and electronic storage and exchange of patient data.
- The drafting and implementation of guidelines as to how physicians should use eHealth applications, medical apps, social media and electronic data exchange.

- Research into the effectiveness and efficiency of telemedicine applications that are promising or are already used on a limited scale, particularly teledermatology, telemonitoring in chronic heart failure and diabetes, e-mental health and other forms of remote guidance, care and monitoring.
- Support for activities designed to achieve a single language and promote interoperability and standardisation for eHealth applications.

The KNMG organises conferences about eHealth, publishes articles in professional medical journals, has developed guidelines for online physician-patient contact and for the use of social media by physicians, has worked with partners to develop a code of conduct for electronic data exchange and advocates research into promising eHealth applications.

eHealth: the use of innovative information and communications technology applications with the aim of supporting and improving health and healthcare.

Telemedicine, remote care, is the part of eHealth that involves at least one care provider; this includes e-consultations, diagnostics, monitoring, treatment, guidance, supervision, access to and exchange of patient data, electronic decision support, integrated care support and so on.

In addition to telemedicine, eHealth also encompasses patient portals, applications to support self-management, the provision of information to patients and consumers, electronic agreements, online contact with fellow patients and more.