

Azienda Ulss 7 Pedemontana Telemedicine experimentation project



GENERAL PRESENTATION

The Local Health Authority Ulss7 Pedemontana covers an area of about 1.500 sq km and guarantees assistance to 362.000 residents.

However, the territory is characterized by a wide portion of mountain area, about 60%, where almost 15 % of the population live.

Many road connections are complex and difficult, especially in winter time, and it is therefore crucial for the Health Authority to provide services that help maintain the direct contact with people and guarantee the fulfilment of their needs.

Considering the actual difficulties regarding outgoing clinicians (as transfer, retirement, ...) and the need to ensure appropriate access to the hospital, on the basis of national and regional indications on Telemedicine, ULSS 7 Pedemontana has activated 2 innovative experimental projects, approved by Veneto Region.

In **hospital setting** the experimentation involves the adoption the open platform TreC, developed by the Autonomous Province of Trento and the Health Authority of Trento. The platform is currently used by the Cardiology department of Bassano hospital.

Regarding **the territorial area**, ULSS 7 Pedemontana has activated an innovative experimental project which allows the access to telemedicine services from pharmacies and Residential Care Homes for the elderly, through the use of an all in one device for remote activities.

Following a market research, ULSS 7 Pedemontana identified the Tytocare system, an “all in one” system extensively used in many countries (such as Israel and Canada).

The system allows a series of checks thanks to the double camera and to a series of tools that define the basic kit (thermometer, stethoscope, otoscope and tongue depressor).

The device measures a series of parameters in order to identify common diseases (upper respiratory infections, ear infections, dermatitis, cardiac and respiratory rhythm abnormalities).

This slide shows the steps of the project, which was presented in May 2021 and the beginning of activities last September 2021. The project was shared with the various stakeholders and a working group is dedicated to the project management.

HOW IT WORKS - AT RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY

The project involves the delivery of a Tytocare device to each Residential Care Homes for the elderly.

The Tytocare device gives the possibility to ask for the consultation of a Geriatrician specialist whenever there's a doubt about the health conditions of a patient.

Through this device it's possible to manage the periodical visits and exams of the patients, with a reduction of all the risks and costs associated to the transfer to the hospital. It also gives a continuous support to physicians and nurses in the management of the most fragile and complex cases.

In the territory of Ulss 7 Pedemontana there are 33 Residential Care facilities for the elderly, with about 2.900 places available. 20 out of 33 Residential Care Homes for the elderly joined the experimental project, covering therefore a wide portion of the territory.

HOW IT WORKS - AT THE PHARMACIES

The device described above was also delivered to the pharmacies participating in the project.

The pharmacist, during opening hours, activates through the device a remote consultation with a physician belonging to a dedicated Unit of ULSS 7 Pedemontana. The pharmacist represents the professional support figure in the use of the device and guarantees its correct use and the right interpretation, on behalf of the patient, of the physician's advice.

The experimentation involves the entire population. The citizen can contact the pharmacy in case of manifestation of non-acute need in order to:

- prevent inappropriate access to hospital or ER giving the patients an alternative way to contact a physician
- receive a preliminary diagnosis before further diagnostic tests, specialist examination or pharmaceutical prescriptions.

With the Cardiology Unit at Bassano Hospital, a different way to use the tele medical examination in the pharmacy was tested: the patient who has carry out periodic monitoring at the Cardiology Clinic, goes by appointment to the nearest pharmacy from where they can connect with the Cardiologist specialist in tele medical examination and carry out some measurements using Tytocare (eg heartbeat detection).

In the territory of the ULSS 7 Pedemontana there are 113 pharmacies. 61 out of 113 pharmacies have joined the Project.

Pharmacies, thanks to their wide dislocation in the territory, represent an important center in particular in areas distant from health centers and in which the specialist's patients find it more difficult to reach the specialist who is in hospital.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

Provide a more accurate monitoring and a timely care of particularly fragile categories, such as the elderly in residential facilities.

Provide well-timed answers to citizens based on the evaluation of a clinician and with the support of some device indicators. At the same time improve the appropriateness of access to General Practitioners and Emergency Department, which is particularly important during this pandemic period.

Carry out medical follow-ups at distance, very useful for patients who reach hospitals with difficulty, and particularly useful in this period of covid-19 poandemia which has limited hospital access.

FIRST RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Pharmacies have recorded the greatest number of tele medical examinations, in comparison to other areas. In the table we can see the first results.

The analysis of the data collected in the first months of experimentation revealed that almost all visits are carried out with the support of the pharmacist. To date pharmacies have performed more than 60 tele medical examinations, a lower number than expected. It must certainly be considered that pharmacies are currently making a very important contribution in the management of the pandemic by carrying out rapid antigen tests and administering vaccines, which leaves little time for other activities.

Despite this health framework, we are however implementing a series of actions that facilitate the use of the television in pharmacy.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Identify and provide pharmacists and users with precise information regarding the type of access that can be managed with tele medical examination → we have prepared a poster to hang in the pharmacy
- Better manage the specialist's follow up activity, reserving a time slot for each patient in pharmacy
- Provide patients to use tele medical examination with a questionnaire useful for collecting any critical issues and suggestions