

NEWSLETTER

A monthly publication providing the latest research and information to help support medical practitioners and individuals

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How eHealth Revolutionized Healthcare in Estonia

In order to learn more of the recently deployed e-Health system in Estonia, MEDx.Care sent its delegation in early May to meet the representatives of the Estonian government, which has been regarded as one of the most advanced e-Health systems in the world.

When Estonia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, less than half of the population had phone line. Now, 25 years later, the country is one of the world's leading countries in terms of digitalized services. Their movements towards an “electronic-society” has been named e-Estonia, and it aims to diminish the lengthened bureaucracy from the past, wherever and whenever possible. A few examples of the possibilities of e-Estonia are the online voting in national elections, to sign legally-binding contracts, file tax returns or to register new businesses online within minutes.

Other applications include online school records which facilitates parents to have more visibility in their children's school activities and performance, but also online population registry, digital police services and, as mentioned earlier, healthcare.

In 2008, the Estonian government launched the Electronic Health Registry. It is an online system handling the patient data, information and advice about health and treatments but it also gives fast access to test results.

This is beneficial for both the healthcare seekers, practitioners, and providers. Two years later, the e-Prescription system was launched. This system allows doctors to prescribe medicine online rather than using paperwork. This saves valuable time and resources, and advances the life quality for the Estonian citizens.

As a result of this digitalization of services, Estonia's healthcare expenditures have dropped to just 6% of their GDP, making it the most cost-effective healthcare system in Europe. Surprisingly, the system was created for just €7.50 per citizen.

The nation's success is of good news for MEDx.Care, because of its philosophy and goal that aligns with MEDx's. Medical online platforms should be optimized to make healthcare system in the developing countries easier, faster, cheaper, patient-centered and more accessible.

▪ MEDx by Thomas van der Lee

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PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH MORTALITY PREVENTION

"How technology enhances the quality of pregnancy."

A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) released in November last year revealed that approximately 830 women die every day as a result of problems during pregnancy and childbirth with a percentage of more than 90% of deaths occurring in the developing countries. The WHO, then, developed the Sustainable Development Agenda, which has a goal of reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to under 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Many of these deaths could have been prevented with better education and access to the healthcare system. The usage of related mobile apps, known as mHealth, has been proven to be a valuable tool to achieve these 2030 goals. The fact that the usage of smartphones in developing countries is increasing rapidly helps WHO to socialize the system into everyday practice. In this article, three ways are described how the use of smartphones could have a positive impact on the lives of pregnant women.

1. **MOMConnect** is an SMS service which provides essential information for women during all stages of pregnancy. It was launched in

2014 by the South African government. Within months after launch, over 500,000 mothers signed up for the program. They receive simple yet informative text messages every week, until the baby's first birthday. The texts are linked to the stage of pregnancy, and address topics such as nutrition and vaccination. The messages are available in eleven different languages. This simple mobile service is also used to give feedback on the existing healthcare services. The government can use this valuable information to optimize healthcare in the country. For women outside South Africa, GiftedMom offers a comparable service. See www.giftedmom.org.

2. **Safe Pregnancy and Birth** is an app providing pregnant women and healthcare providers in emerging countries essential information regarding pregnancy and birth. The app covers four major entities: How to stay healthy during pregnancy, danger signs during pregnancy, danger signs during birth, and danger signs after birth. Moreover, the app contains a "how to" section providing valuable information of topics such as how to change a baby's position or how to treat infections during labor or after birth.

The mobile app by Hesperian Health Guides was the winner of the Intel "She Will Innovate" competition in 2012. The app is available in English and Spanish and can be used on iPhone and iPad, or on Android devices.

3. **Zero Mothers Die (ZMD)** is another app for pregnant women in emerging countries. It aims to save lives by providing this group essential information about pregnancy and birth by text messages, voice messages but also by providing free minutes for calling local health workers for information and assistance, and for help during emergencies. Moreover, Zero Mothers Die also aims to increase the knowledge of local healthcare providers. To accomplish this, the app brought together public and private sector partners. The app can be downloaded for Android based device.

▪ *MEDx by Thomas van der Lee*