Overcoming Challenges When Introducing eHealth: The MOMENTUM Blueprint and Toolkit

FACING CHALLENGES
Telemedicine involves “the provision of healthcare services at a distance” to “help improve the lives of European citizens, both patients and health professionals, while tackling the challenges to healthcare systems”1. Europe’s healthcare systems are facing four noticeable difficulties: socio-economic demands placed on healthcare as a result of the Union’s changing demographics; growing numbers of people with chronic diseases; increased demands from patients for more quality in the provision of healthcare services; and major shortages in healthcare personnel1. Evidence shows that when telemedicine and innovative information and communication technologies are combined with proper organisation, leadership, and skills, they can provide significant benefits in terms of improving healthcare services2. In particular, the European Union’s Competitive and Innovation Programme was established to deal with these challenges and encourage the work of large-scale (and public sector) initiatives to scale-up electronically-based initiatives, including eHealth3.

MOMENTUM
MOMENTUM is an example of an initiative that aimed to create an understanding of the best ways to establish and scale-up telemedicine, telehealth, and telecare, and to explore good practices for mainstreaming telemedicine deployment in daily practice4. It focused on processes and procedures, not on any single form of technology.

MOMENTUM concentrated on addressing the needs of “telemedicine doers”, people actively involved in deploying telemedicine around Europe and beyond. These telemedicine doers include leaders in healthcare authorities, hospital managers, public administrators, clinicians, entrepreneurs, and business executives.

The MOMENTUM project was conducted with the support of a consortium of 20 organisations, including health professional associations, telemedicine associations, and competence centres. European stakeholder associations participating in the initiative represented healthcare professionals, healthcare organisations, telecare organisations, health insurers, and technology vendors. Participants originated from Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Israel and Norway also contributed to the project.

Momentum Workshop in Kristiansand with the aim to achieve consensus regarding eHealth success and identify potential barriers.

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The MOMENTUM project identified 18 critical success factors considered vital for telemedicine deployment (see BOX). These became a set of guidelines called the MOMENTUM Blueprint. To arrive at these results, MOMENTUM analysed three case studies, as well as 25 other telemedicine services.

The three case studies all represent established services that support routine care:

1) The Intervention of Treatment of Hypertension Arterial in Catalonia (ITHACA) Programme provides telemedicine services for chronic hypertensive patients in the Catalonian region. It supports the work of local healthcare professionals.

2) The Maccabi Telemedicine Centre for Chronic Patients (MOMA) in Israel has reduced hospitalisations by lowering patients’ depression and thereby helping them attain healthier lifestyles. Maccabi’s doctors and nurses are pleased with its support services.

3) The Norwegian Teledialysis programme, with the remote support of a high-level tertiary care centre, enables dialysis patients to be treated in their own community. Local treatment allows patients, as well as doctors and nurses, to avoid considerable travel, time, and resource demands.

To make the guidelines even more practical and ready for use by doers, the MOMENTUM Toolkit was developed for measuring the extent to which each success factor is present in a particular telemedicine setting. Through the use of this Toolkit, all 18 critical success factors are now featured in an online questionnaire survey, and the survey results are processed electronically.

The goal of identifying MOMENTUM’s 18 critical success factors in an organisation’s specific setting is to help doers develop their own telemedicine action plans. By using the MOMENTUM guidelines and building their own action plans, doers can achieve the deployment of telehealth in both routine care and on a large scale.

**MOMENTUM TOOLKIT IN PRACTICE**

The MOMENTUM guidelines and Toolkit now also serve as the basis for a series of facilitated workshops. The objective of a workshop is to perform a health assessment of a particular service’s deployment processes. All key stakeholders in a telemedicine setting – such as healthcare services’ chief medical officers, chief executive officers, and chief information officers, plus leaders in specialist medical areas (e.g., chronic diseases) – meet to-

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**BOX: MOMENTUM’S 18 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Ensure that there is cultural readiness for the telemedicine service.
- Come to a consensus on the advantages of telemedicine in meeting compelling need(s).
- Ensure leadership through a champion.
- Involve healthcare professionals and decision-makers.
- Put the patient at the centre of the service.
- Ensure that the technology is user-friendly.
- Pull together the resources needed for deployment.
- Address the needs of the primary client(s).
- Prepare and implement a business plan.
- Prepare and implement a change of management plan.
- Assess the conditions under which the service is legal.
- Guarantee that the technology has the potential for scale-up.
- Identify and apply relevant legal and security guidelines.
- Involve legal and security experts.
- Ensure that telemedicine doers and users are “privacy aware”.
- Ensure that the appropriate information technology infrastructure and eHealth infrastructure are in place.
- Put in place the technology and processes needed to monitor the service.
- Establish and maintain good procurement processes.
In the future, the MOMENTUM team looks forward to applying the MOMENTUM Toolkit in many other settings.

The project was completed officially earlier this year, in February 2015. Its project members continue, however, with other engagements and commitments related to MOMENTUM (e.g., the MOMENTUM workshop training described above). For more information about MOMENTUM about the workshops held, see the MOMENTUM and EHTEL websites, or contact info@telemedicine-momentum.eu.

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**REFERENCES**


