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FRANCE

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MALTA

1. Current state of play

- Until recently, the long-term care (LTC) sector in France was lagging significantly behind in investment in ICT and digital solutions. Some nursing homes and home care services were already well connected, but others were still operating with paper.
- In 2019, the government adopted a roadmap for accelerating the digital shift in health.
- It included a digital plan for nursing homes and home care services.
- This initial step was amplified in 2020 with the national plan for health. This plan was elaborate in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, to support the health system.
- It provides for an investment of 600 million euros in the care sector dedicated to digital technology.
- These funds come from the European Recovery & Resilience Fund.

2. Primary Use

- The digital plan for nursing homes and home care services aims to facilitate the transformation of the care sector by:
 - expand the use of digital technology in institutions and home care services.
 - speed up the development of the software offering, especially in terms of interoperability.
- It aims to generalize a smooth and secure sharing of health data between professionals.
- The plan is essentially based on the implementation of an electronic patient file for each client.
- The objective is to provide every nursing home and home care service with an interoperable and communicating electronic patient file by 2025.

2. Primary Use

- The electronic patient file is supposed to communicate with a personal health environment.
- A personal health environment is indeed implemented in France. It is called “My health space”. It was generalized for all citizens in January 2022.
- It allows you to store your information and to share it with health professionals.
- It includes :
 - health records;
 - A secure messaging system.

3. Secondary Use

- Data from the care sector are intended to feed the national health data system.
- The national health data system was introduced in 2016. It is managed by the French health data hub and et the health insurance.
- One of the tasks of the health data hub is to collect and make available health data for projects of public interest for research, study and assessment in the health sector.
- The French Health Data Hub is a partner in developing the European Health Data Hub.
- The European Health Data Hub will provide a framework for the exchange of health data between European Union member states.
 - Health data will be shared for research and innovation purposes.
 - The hub will also provide European citizens with direct and easy access to their health data.

4. Technology and digital tools in LTC

- Technology and digital tools have been introduced in France to some extent: medication dispenser, fall prediction, smart diapers and so on.
- But they are not implemented on a large scale. You will find them only in some organizations.
- One of the reasons is the lack of funding. Professional care givers aren't always able to afford the equipment.
- Another reason is the lack of vision and evaluation. The market is teeming with offers and it is difficult to identify what is really useful and helpful.

4. Telehealth

- Telehealth is rather well implemented in France, with telemedicine and telecare (remote care with a pharmacist or a medical auxiliary, like a nurse). The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the expansion of telehealth.
- Any doctor can use teleconsultation regardless of his or her specialty and place of practice. Teleconsultation is reimbursed by health insurance like a face-to-face consultation. Telemonitoring, tele-expertise and telecare are also reimbursed by health insurance.
- 10 million teleconsultations took place in France in 2021 (3.7% of the activity in 2021). But it still remains relatively infrequent and mainly concerns people living in large urban areas.
- A lot of nursing homes are equipped with telemedicine. But it is not always used. The main obstacles are the lack of time (the time needed by health professionals to operate telemedicine is not taken into account) and sometimes the lack of doctors : when there is no one to answer, telemedicine is useless.

4. GPS-Tracking

- GPS-Tracking is used in France to monitor the movements of people with dementia. But it brings up ethical problems when it is used only for security purposes and does not allow the person concerned to enjoy greater freedom.
- The government tried to regulate the use of GPS-tracking with a charter of good practices in 2013: for example,
 - you must inform the person concerned and ask for their consent.
 - You cannot use non-removable equipment.
- The charter of good practices didn't work out. It was supposed to be tested, but a change of minister intervened and it disappeared in the meantime.

4. Robotics

- Robots are beginning to be introduced in nursing homes. However, their use is still exceptional.
- They are used for rehabilitation or to promote social interaction. And with people with dementia, as a tool for cognitive stimulation.
- The main obstacles for the implementation of robots are:
 - The lack of funding: it's very expensive and they are not reimbursed by health insurance.
 - The lack of vision : the use of robots is not yet well defined, nor documented.

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