

## Press Release

Vienna, 16 April 2021

### POLITICS MEETS SCIENCE ON TELEHEALTH IN AUSTRIA

High-profile panel at the 3<sup>rd</sup> dHealth Pulse on telehealth topics

**On Tuesday evening, 13 April 2021, more than 80 participants virtually attended the third dHealth Pulse event - this time on the topic of "Telehealth Services - The Road to Standard Care". In one and a half hours, the prominent panel presented and discussed the current developments in the pioneer states of Tyrol and Styria, especially using the example of HerzMobil. The event was moderated by the AIT expert for telehealth Günter Schreier, Competence Unit Digital Health Innovation Systems of the Center for Health & Bioresources.**

In the ongoing pandemic, the use of state-of-the-art information and communication technologies not only facilitates communication and enables virtual meetings, but also demonstrates the advantages and applicability of these technologies in the treatment and care of patients in the context of therapy management in the form of telehealth services, particularly in such a situation. The telehealth system HerzMobil, developed by AIT together with the states of Tyrol and Styria, show the advantages of telehealth services used in the care of patients with chronic heart failure. In these two provinces, this type of therapy management has already become part of standard care. The underlying technology can be flexibly adapted to the needs of healthcare providers and is also in use for other areas, such as diabetes and outpatient stroke care. The telehealth solution supports patients and healthcare professionals in their ongoing care as part of their daily therapy routine and allows them to react quickly to deteriorating health conditions. The main topics of the evening were: the path of telehealth services into mainstream care, the structures needed for this, the benefits for persons concerned and patients, as well as the integration and interaction with the ELGA infrastructure by means of telemonitoring episode reporting.

#### The high-caliber virtual podium

In the first presentation of the evening, Bernhard Tilg, Regional Councillor for Health, Care, Senior Citizens and Science in Tyrol, emphasized the importance of telehealth services as an innovative infrastructure for Austrian healthcare: *"The benefits for society and healthcare systems through integrated care are now beyond question. Nevertheless, it is a great challenge for healthcare systems to provide continuous and effective integrated care. Only a few organizations worldwide have succeeded in introducing effective forms of integrated care through disease management programs. That is precisely why telehealth services are of particular importance in the Austrian healthcare system. With the help of data-driven systems, it is possible to ideally support the care network, thus establishing and institutionalizing disease management programs and ensuring added value for all participants in the system. In Tyrol, we have been running a rule-funded disease management program HerzMobil Tirol with a cross-sector treatment pathway and a modern ELGA-based telehealth services infrastructure since 2017 and have provided care for*

*around 600 heart failure patients this way to date. An analogous approach is being pursued in the field of diabetes with DiabCare Tirol. We have thus been able to achieve a significant milestone in the care of chronically ill patients in Tyrolean health care and are thus regarded as a driver of innovation in Austria and Europe".*

For the Styrian Health Councillor, Juliane Bogner-Strauß, telehealth services are the best way to provide targeted and patient-centred care: *"We are experiencing the extent to which digitization has arrived in our daily lives in a very special way, especially with the Corona crisis. Therefore, our goal must be to advance digitization in healthcare and to make digital solutions available to patients, in a simple way and with the highest possible medical benefit. Our projects, such as HerzMobil Steiermark, show that digitization in combination with integrated care simplifies high-quality care for both practitioners and patients, especially in the case of chronic diseases. Our task is to drive this development forward and to ensure that the financing of eHealth applications becomes possible in regular business. We will therefore advocate and campaign for acceptance so that those responsible at both, the federal and social insurance levels, include this accordingly in the overall contract."*

Andreas Huber, Director of the Regional Institute for Integrated Care Tyrol, presented telehealth services as the key to integrated care, using Tyrol as an example: *"One of the tasks of the State Institute for Integrated Care Tyrol is to establish integrated care processes and innovative treatment structures. The goal is to increase medical and nursing care while reducing costs. Patient-oriented care is provided in an interdisciplinary and multi-professional network of professionals from a wide range of health care professions. This treatment network is supported by telehealth services in a valuable way. For example, the HerzMobil Tirol network can access a specially developed telemonitoring program that ensures patients are monitored regardless of location or time - an added value for the entire system and, above all, for the patients."*

The medical director of HerzMobil Tirol Gerhard Pölzl showed how the telemedical treatment paths increase the quality of life of patients and significantly reduce the mortality rate in practice: *"Since 2012, we have been caring for patients in the telemonitoring program HerzMobil Tirol, which was included in standard care in 2017. In the meantime, we can look back on more than 600 patient cases. A study of the data has impressively shown that our program is effective. For example, the re-admission rate to hospitals within six months after a decompensation due to a heart failure (relative risk reduction of 59% in hospital admissions for heart failure per 100 person-years) as well as the one-year mortality (relative risk reduction of 62%) could be reduced. Not to be neglected is also the subjective feeling of the patients, who we provide a sense of security and more quality of life through our program."*

The head of the Department of Internal Medicine at LKH Hochsteiermark, Gerald Zenker, sees this form of care, the telehealth services, as an important tool for the future: *"Styria is a pioneer in the field of health care by supporting eHealth applications. The example of HerzMobil Steiermark, which is currently being rolled out throughout Styria, shows that the care for heart failure patients is achieving remarkable results and creating enormous patient satisfaction. Hospital stays have been more than halved and patient mortality has been significantly reduced; vital signs are continuously monitored via electronic transmission, making it easier for everyone involved. In addition, patients*

*are well trained and cared for at home by specialists. The existing structures can also be used in other areas of cardiology, such as the follow-ups for patients with pacemakers. It is important for eHealth projects to be transferred to standard care. And not to forget, the feedback from patients is tremendous: they feel well and safely accompanied and learn to manage their own disease better by entering data."*

From ELGA GmbH, Nikola Tanjga presented how HerzMobil could serve as a reference system for the new telemonitoring episode report: *"In order to bring telehealth services and ELGA together, the first step has been taken with the new CDA document standard "Telemonitoring Episode Report". From the end of 2021, patients can already expect the first telemonitoring episode reports from, for example, HerzMobil in their own ELGA."*

The event concluded with a lively discussion and Q&A session including all participants and speakers. Moderator and host of the event Günter Schreier: *"I would like to thank our top-class speakers for this unique presentation of essential success factors for establishing telehealth services, and I look forward to continuing this discussion in relevant sessions at dHealth and future dHealth Pulses."*

#### **dHealth 2021 and its PULSE event series**

dHealth 2021 will take place on 11 and 12 May - THE Austrian event for healthcare policy, healthcare IT and professional networks on the topic of "navigating healthcare through challenging times." The new regular "dHealth Pulse" sessions extend the dHealth to the whole year and deal with the hot topics from digital health, AI in healthcare and AAL on focus evenings.

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