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Telemedicine – the future of healthcare services

POLAND IS STILL CATCHING UP TO OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHEN IT COMES TO PROVIDING E-HEALTH SERVICES, BUT THE POTENTIAL OF HEALTH TECH START-UPS BODES WELL FOR THE FUTURE OF TELEMEDICINE

Since late 2015 it has been legal to provide healthcare services in Poland via data communication systems. In other words, there are no direct restrictions to developing telemedicine solutions for patients.

Unfortunately, Poland is still one of the lowest ranked places in Europe in terms of the level of e-health development. A primary cause is that Poland needs to catch up due to its previous long-term neglect of such solutions. All the legislation that has been aimed at developing e-health tools is behind schedule due to deficiencies in conducting projects, a lack of readiness in public healthcare entities and certain legal issues. It is assumed that by 2020 patients in Poland will be using their Internet Patient Accounts allowing access to, inter alia, medical documentation and e-prescriptions. One issue concerns the legal aspects of the security and confidentiality of patients' sensitive personal data. Another issue is the lack of unified regulations at EU level.

Today, in general, only private healthcare service providers offer certain services to their clients. Telemedicine is considered a tool for cutting patients' treatment costs and enhancing the functioning of the healthcare system. In practical terms telemedicine will, on the one hand, make medical advice less time-consuming and more comfortable and, on the other hand, diminish queues, which are a severe problem in Poland. The more services that can be provided remotely or even by patients on their own, the more time doctors will have for the severely ill. And the time needed to see a doctor will be significantly reduced.

As e-health is a very broad term, it also pertains to a wide range of products e.g. mobile applications, for self-diagnosis, diagnostics applications or even treatment. Such products are often offered by start-up companies. It seems that healthcare is one of the fastest growing sectors in which start-ups operate. Consequently, we strongly believe that companies offering innovative products within telemedicine/e-health/m-health have a bright future, and Poland is one of the best markets in the European Union in which to start. Many potential investors are much more interested in newly established companies with an innovative idea than traditional healthcare providers.

Considering the above, it seems clear that Poland will be a great place for telemedicine and e-health product development in the very near future and, simultaneously, an attractive opportunity for investors. We believe that sooner or later, we will catch up with the leaders and this will have a positive influence on the quality of healthcare services in Poland. ●

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