

## **Digitisation could reduce healthcare costs by CHF 100 million**

**Healthcare costs and health insurance premiums are continuing to rise in Switzerland. Inefficiencies in the exchange of data between healthcare providers are one reason for the increases. A study conducted by PwC for Swisscom has shown that digitising communications between doctors and hospitals could reduce processing costs by 90%. The change could cut costs by over CHF 100 million in Switzerland while maintaining quality.**

Healthcare costs are continuing to spiral in Switzerland. Total expenditure on healthcare rose by 5.3% year on year in 2012. According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 11.5% of GDP is spent on healthcare.\*

### **Digitise two processes and save over CHF 100 million**

Swisscom commissioned PwC to examine the information exchange process between resident physicians and two hospitals. PwC looked at referrals from general practitioners and specialists to the hospitals and the subsequent dispatch of discharge reports. The study found that the Swiss healthcare sector is still very much paper-based: electronic media are rarely used, while faxes and letters are still the standard mode of communication. Fully digitising these processes could reduce processing costs by around 90%.

PwC's projections indicate that simply by changing these two processes, annual costs could be reduced by between CHF 81 million and CHF 139 million. The potential savings that could be achieved by digitising the Swiss healthcare sector overall are even greater: experts estimate that the system produces 250 million paper documents every year. Philip Sommer of PwC Healthcare Consulting is co-author of the study and has identified other benefits in addition to cost savings. "Cooperation between GPs, specialists and hospitals is becoming increasingly important with the rise in chronic illnesses. Electronic data transfers not only offer cost savings, they can also improve the speed and quality of information flows between providers."



### **Electronic health records are the key to reducing costs**

PwC compared a number of digitisation solutions. To generate maximum savings, medical records would need to be available in electronic form. This is the only way to ensure the smooth exchange of all relevant administrative and medical data between healthcare providers.

### **Electronic data exchange solutions are already available**

Using Evita, the online healthcare dossier by Swisscom, patient-authorised doctors and hospitals are able to access the patient's X-rays, vaccination records, information about prescribed medication and allergies, and test results. A number of affordable systems are already available which allow healthcare providers to exchange information securely and efficiently. Swisscom welcomes the Swiss federal government's decision to establish a legal framework for electronic medical records.

### **Electronic patient records are good news for patients**

Stefano Santinelli, Head of Swisscom Health, explains how making medical care information available electronically also has many benefits for patients: "If doctors are able to view medical records and test results electronically, they can avoid repeating examinations. Doctors can access all medical and administrative information with just one click. In addition, by linking health records and sensors, vital medical data such as blood pressure and weight can also be made available to doctors. Patients would also have a comprehensive overview of their health data at all times."

\*Figures are based on the most recent provisional data on healthcare costs and financing issued by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

Berne, 2 September 2014

[www.swisscom.ch/health](http://www.swisscom.ch/health)

The online healthcare dossier by Swisscom: [www.evita.ch](http://www.evita.ch)

Networking and medical practice software for doctors by Swisscom: [www.curaprax.ch](http://www.curaprax.ch)