

Social Efficiency of Modern Telemedicine

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The idea of giving a patient a possibility to get high-quality medical advice independent of this patient or the consulting doctor location until recently was only a subject for discussion.

Today the World Health Organization (WHO) defines telemedicine as medical practice, which uses audio, video and data exchange equipment for consultations, treatment and for provision of other medical services to the patients. With the advent of telemedicine sufficiently developed countries receive an opportunity to successfully solve an important social problem - providing their citizens with equal access to high-quality medical care independent of the distance of their location from large medical centres or clinics.

As the world market survey shows there are multiple areas of application of videoconference facilities in medicine - from advice given by narrow specialists to psychotherapy sessions and remote control of manipulators during surgery. Practically, no major obstacle stands in the way of spreading this service throughout the world and integration it into routine medical practice.

As a country with great intellectual potential, Russia has all necessary conditions for offering good products to the new market. One of the examples of a successful competitive product of the Russian information economy is the telemedicine project "Moscow - Russian Regions", whose favorable development may result in the offering of a range of intellectual products in the market.

Within the framework of this project, last year we provided tele-consultations to over 1200 patients in more than 35 regional clinics, (cardiac surgery, urology, neurosurgery, podiatry, children's surgery, ophthalmology, etc). Wide scale of health service we support have brought gave us unique experience in organization of teleconsultations process: getting e-mail letter of inquiry from

region for consultation, receiving by e-mail checkup results of patient, demands and receiving by e-mail additional checkup results of patient, teleconsultations process (in contrast with an individual consultation of a patient by a clinic specialist, in teleconsultations, two doctors communicate - the patient's doctor and the consultant. As a result, in such a discussion, the consultant receives much more objective professional information about the patient, which enhances the efficiency of such communication between the doctors), sum up and legalization of tele-consultations results, archiving information. Now we have possibility of working with a number of regions in the same time (multi-point systems). New technologies are the way to show unique operations and methods of diagnosis that is vary important when video consultations takes place before and after complex operations. Cost of video consultations is about 10-20 times lower then needed for usual consultations (distance dependent parameter). It is important that the video consultations were provided by the leading Russian experts: academicians, corresponding members of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences and more than twenty professors. Currently, the teleconsultations centres set up within the framework of this project are actively functioning in more than 35 regions from Tataria to East Siberia. We have a fruitful contacts and cooperation with telemedicine centres in Europe and North America.

Our six years experience has shown that for the local population such a telemedicine centers provides an access to the world leading specialists, while the expenses of the individuals needing such consultations are significantly lower than the ones they have to incur for traveling to a clinic.

References:

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