

Pres release No1

Smart Patients

Holistic Empowerment of Citizens to Become Experts in Their Own Health

Link: <https://smart-patients.eu>

One of the main EU Health Strategy objective includes „empowering citizens – putting patients at the heart of the system and encouraging them to be involved in managing their own healthcare needs“. Preventive care should therefore not be left alone to doctors and hospitals, also the individual must be empowered and become a „smart patient“. A “smart patient” is someone who takes an active role in his or her health; whereby we follow the definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO) from 1948: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

To become a smart patient has to be learned. The corresponding educational process on which our project is based is empowerment. To this end, it requires a holistic approach that includes, as the WHO definition states, aspects not only from medicine, but also from sociology and psychology. The partnership of the “Smart Patients” project comprises an interdisciplinary team of medical, social and adult education experts, who are keen to meet the requirements of the patients. Smart patients understand their own contribution to recovery as a necessary complement, rather than competition with the achievements of medicine. They also want to lead a life that prevents them becoming a patient. They understand that health cannot be maintained only by medical intervention, but depends also on lifestyle as well as on social and environmental factors.

The goal of the “Smart Patients” project is to empower citizens to develop self-confidence and patients’ competence in interaction with medical experts, to support them in preventing disease and detecting health issues at an early stage and to understand their own contribution to recovery as a necessary complement, rather than compete with the achievements of medicine. The results of the project are internet and mobile application, basic tools with recommendations, tips and guidelines for preventive care, empowerment and participation in the process of healing and accepting a new life perspective.

The European dimension of the project is achieved by the fact that the partnership spans from North-West (Ireland) via South-West (Portugal) via Central Europa to the East (Greece). In a world of globalisation, the project will therefore develop transnational best practice approaches and transfer them into localized solutions in the eight European states of the partnership and beyond. The partnership comprises a multi-disciplinary team of health organisations, education and pedagogic expert partners as well as ICT and multimedia specialists.

The important milestone at the beginning of the project was the Need Assessment Report. It resulted a gap analysis, which served as a basis for development of the learning materials. The Report revealed that the health issues are of the utmost importance for the citizens and they are interested in doing things to maintain or improve their health. There is also, a well-established culture in seeking medical information in Internet and citizens use computer, mobile devices and internet on a daily basis. On the other hand, analysis revealed low level of health literacy, unsatisfactory communication between doctors and patients, low perceived reliability of the medical sites and apps, limited percentage of doctors who inform citizens via Internet and that current sites are almost exclusively in English and informative (patients’ passive role) and presented in a static format. Opportunities of the project are delivering the health information material through mobile phone

apps to people without access to computer. Information that would be available in several European languages of migrants and refugees and also, in languages of migrants and refugees what could help citizens to gain better health literacy. It could Improve communication between doctors and patients (e.g. through university-courses during medical studies) and with citizens before they become patients. Opportunity is also, creation of interesting, motivational, simple, brief and interactive tool, which would meet health needs of the citizens and would activate them and focus on prevention, empowerment and participation.