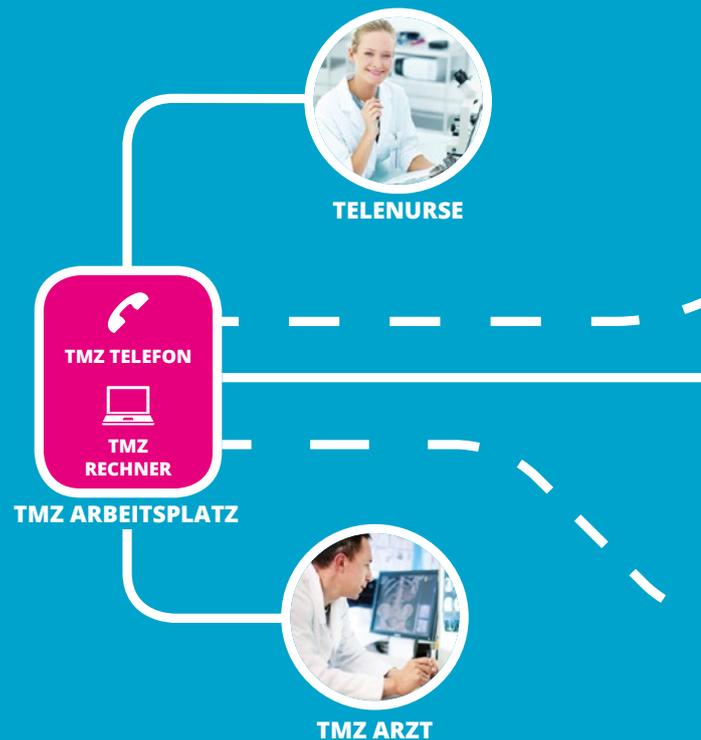


Where Telemedicine Literally Becomes Existential



Five years ago, Europe's first trans-regional, open telemedicine platform, Telehealth 360, was launched. Currently, numerous health applications are running on it, including the St. Georg Hospital in Leipzig. At present, they are working on the eTumorkonsil, which is intended to support physicians in the treatment of cancer patients.

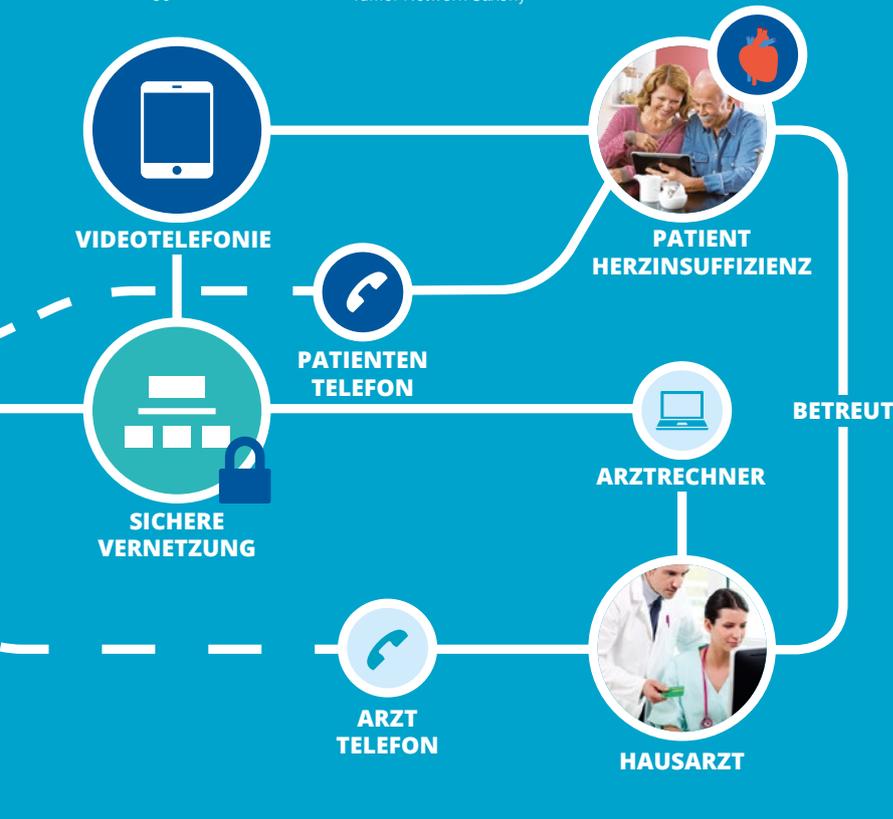
COPY — Silke Kilz

When the doctors at St. Georg Hospital dial into the weekly tumour conference, no one talks about sales figures or profitability: it's about human lives. Leadership includes oncologists, surgeons, pathologists and other physicians from various disciplines. Together they discuss the cancer findings of patients, obtain second opinions or discuss suitable therapy steps. "This professional exchange can often save lives," explains Dr. Nicole Lakowa from the St. Georg Hospital, Project Manager of the Tumour Network. "The earlier and more targeted a tumour-patient is treated, the better his chances of being cured." According to the Robert Koch Institute, this is good news for the 480,000 people who contract cancer every year in Germany. Malignant tumours are still the second most frequent cause of death in Germany after cardiovascular diseases.

VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

In the future, this form of interdisciplinary cooperation will also be possible for specialists from other clinics and practices throughout Bavaria. With the establishment of the "Saxony Tumour Network," the clinic in Leipzig will give hospital doctors from other institutions, as well as medical practitioners, the opportunity to transfer their patient and treatment data in a standardised way and to participate virtually in the tumour conferences. Using the "eTumorkonsil," physicians can also obtain specialist advice and document it comprehensively. For the development of the network, the hospital will receive around 1.7 million euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The application is simple. If you want to participate, you dial into the conference via a terminal server solution and



PROVEN TO BE BETTER PROVIDED FOR

However, the digital platform offers even more application possibilities. Among other things, it is used to treat patients on an outpatient basis after a stroke. People suffering from heart failure can also be cared for and medically monitored at home via telemedicine. A service that can also save lives, as Berlin's Charité 2018 demonstrated in its Fontane study: "The study results show for the first time that telemedicine leads to an extension of life and fewer hospital stays for high-risk patients with cardiac insufficiency," explains Prof. Dr. Friedrich Köhler, head of the Fontane study at the Charité.

People with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, dementia or epilepsy can also be better treated via "teleneurology." This due to the fact that the attending physician always has the entire medical file electronically at hand. If there is a serious suspicion, the physician immediately consults the neurologist at the next networked clinic via a video consultation before the patient is admitted there.

multilateral voice or video telephony. The physicians enter the patient data either manually or directly from their own hospital information system via interfaces. The application also provides special forms for case consultations and makes it easier for participants to document the results in a central electronic case conference file.

TELEMEDICINE PLATFORM SERVES AS FOUNDATION

The eTumorkonsil application is based on the telemedical platform Telehealth 360, which has been in operation since 2015, and was implemented by Carus Consilium Sachsen GmbH in cooperation with Telekom. The telemedicine platform enables patients, doctors, nursing staff, pharmacies and health insurance companies to exchange health values, findings, medication or other information via a specially encrypted data network. The servers on which the patient information is stored comply with the highest German data privacy standards.

The St. Georg Hospital already has experience with Telehealth 360. Since June 2019, the facility has been operating an antibiotic council (ABx-eKonsil). Doctors in the outpatient and inpatient departments can "introduce" patients with infectious diseases and obtain advice from the infectiologists at the clinic on the treatment with antimicrobial substances. The experts collect specific knowledge about infectious diseases, antibiotic therapies and multidrug resistance. They collect and analyse patient, prescription and resistance data from health insurance companies, laboratories and clinics and derive specialist recommendations from them.

TELEMEDICINE IS THE FUTURE

Particularly against the background of the increasing shortage of doctors in rural and structurally weak regions, initiatives such as the Saxony Tumour Network are an important building block for providing medical care to the population in the cities as well as in the countryside. This is the result of a recent study commissioned by the digital association Bitkom. "Telemedicine opens up new possibilities for doctors and patients," emphasizes Association President Achim Berg. In many places medical practices are overcrowded. Older people are only mobile to a limited extent – but depend on adequate medical care, even in remote regions. Telemedicine services could significantly improve healthcare processes in addition to standard care.

Communication platforms such as Telehealth 360 make a significant contribution to establishing telemedical applications in Germany and Europe. "The possibilities of this open IT platform are immense," explains Peter Weber, Senior Sector Manager Telemedicine Telekom Healthcare Solutions. "It provides all central components for the electronic networking of medical facilities and can thus be easily expanded to include solutions for different pathologies without the participants needing their own new network."

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