

Care Collaboration and Patient Engagement

eHealth Virtual Visit as a driver for digitalization

SALK – “Online Consultation” Project

siemens-healthineers.com/ehealth



Digitalization of healthcare and expanding access to care in the region of Salzburg, Austria

How the “Online Consultation” Project is driving the digitalization of Salzburger Landeskliniken (SALK) and enabling virtual patient care to improve patient experience and expand access to healthcare by utilizing eHealth Virtual Visit.



“It started for us in the context of the COVID-19 situation last year in March, where we no longer had any real contact with our patients. The patients, who otherwise often made long journeys to come to us in the clinic, were suddenly no longer there and it was clear to us that we had to look for a solution here, so that we do not lose contact with the patients.”

Prof. Johann Bauer

Head of Department of Dermatology and Allergology,
Salzburger Landeskliniken GmbH



The Salzburger Landeskliniken (SALK) are a hospital association in the Austrian state of Salzburg. At their five locations, they treat about two thirds of all patients from the province and have a large inflow from the southern Bavarian region in Germany.

Healthcare in Austria is on a very high level compared to the rest of the world. Within Austria, SALK are known for the quality of its health care services, which focuses primarily on the treatment of complex and rare diseases such as oncology.

In the Salzburg region, the provision of health care services is primarily characterized by geographic conditions. Many valleys, and thus burdensome travel routes, make access to care difficult for patients who live remote from the urban center – especially during winter.

Not only due to travel burdens, the added value of digital health services in patient care is becoming increasingly apparent – which is also the result of an internal survey of SALK. According to the survey, two-thirds of interviewees were positive for the use of telehealth applications.

The project

For many years, SALK has been focusing on the digitalization of its services. Currently, there are more than 20 projects on the topic of digitalization. The COVID-19 crisis was just an additional trigger point that has raised awareness of the topic among patients and staff alike.

To further improve care delivery, SALK has implemented "Online Consultation", an eHealth Virtual Visit Project, as an application for telehealth services enabled by the teamplay digital health platform, in partnership with Siemens Healthineers. eHealth Virtual Visit is used in various departments of the SALK. Patients in the ambulatory fields of dermatology, orthopedics, traumatology, and psychosomatics, for example, can make follow-ups and control appointments online, as long as their medical condition permits.

The successful realization of the telehealth services should be ensured by conducting the first consultation with a patient on-site.

This allows the attending physicians to check which patients are suitable for and interested in a virtual visit. Initial educational conversation should help to inform patients about the general conditions, to hand over information material and to clarify all data protection issues.

Doctors can integrate slots in their working days that are blocked specifically for virtual visits and thus ideally integrate them with face-to-face consultations.

Patients can then register for the corresponding appointment conveniently online from home. They use the Internet address or QR code provided and access via standard PC, tablet, or mobile phone. After they have been admitted from the virtual waiting room, the attending physician first checks the patient's identity before the virtual visit finally takes place.



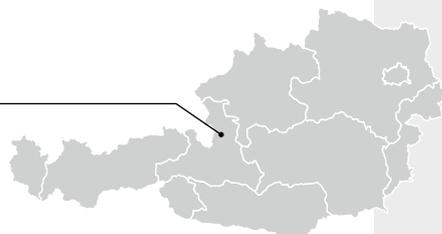
"Siemens Healthineers is already our partner in the ELGA platform, and they stand out because they have high flexibility and full interoperability. That is incredibly important for us."

Doz. Dr. Paul Sungler
Managing Director,
Salzburger Landeskliniken GmbH

Expectations & outlook

The expectations of the project are manifold. On the one hand, the aim is to meet the requirements of the users, i.e., the doctors and patients, as best as possible by providing them a digitalized solution. eHealth Virtual Visit from Siemens Healthineers is intended to be a software solution that enables various use cases and clinical departments to handle online consultations.

Another major driver is the development of healthcare policy, ensuring that health care is provided at the best point of service. While the best point of service might still be the hospital in certain situations, in many cases this can be the patient's home, when he is in his familiar environment. The availability of virtual visits within the "Online Consultation" project gives doctors the flexibility to determine the best point of service for individual cases.



Due to the location of Salzburg and the geographical conditions, eHealth Virtual Visit also offers the possibility to bring the expertise of the doctors at the university hospital easily and quickly to remote areas and thus overcome distance barriers.

As the project progresses, it is expected that the experience gained in handling virtual visits will also help to address challenges such as secure patient identification, administrative burden, and liability.

Facts & figures about SALK

Population Region Salzburg: 555.000

Healthcare system financed by federal entity provinces and social insurances

Hospitals: Five houses with 1.710 beds

Employees: 6.576

Medical Doctors: 946

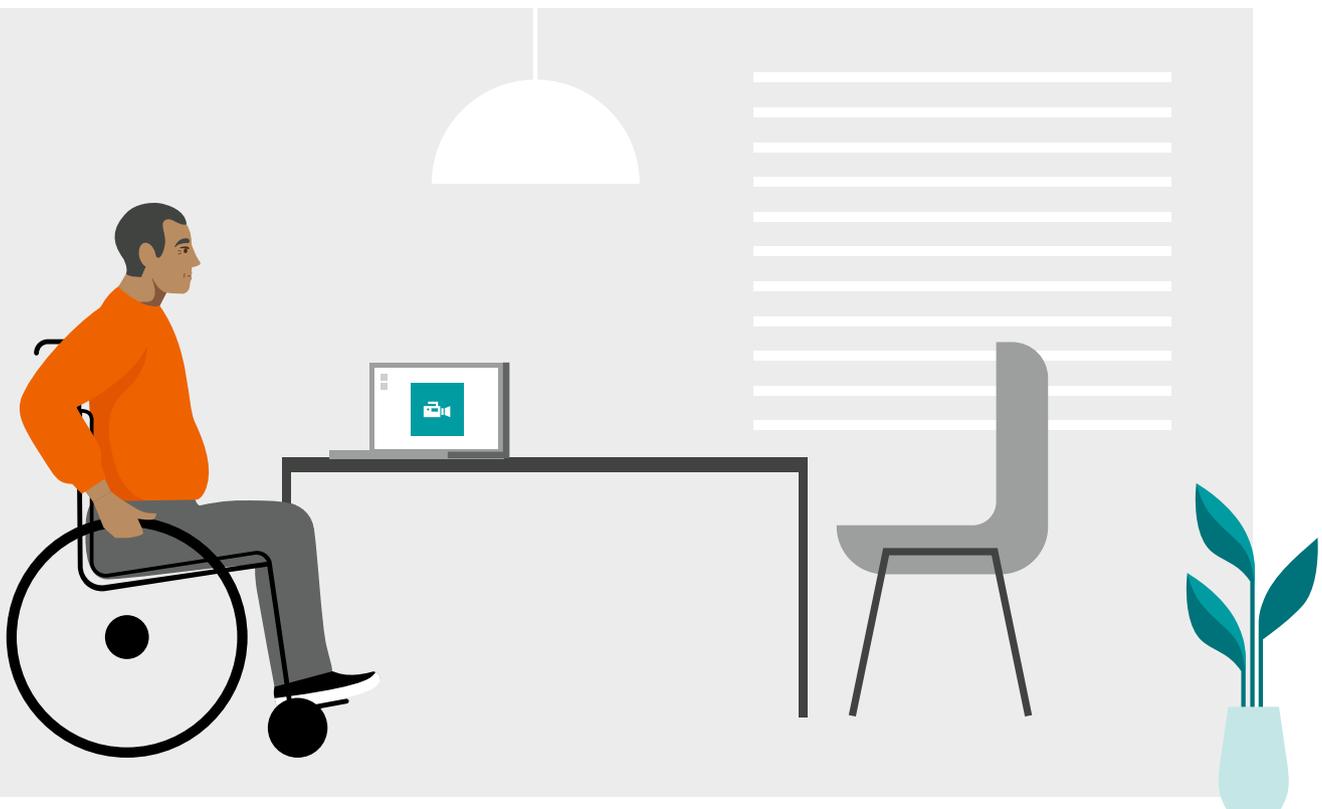


Source: salk.at/DMS/SALK_unternehmen_v8%20Zahlen2020_010721_20433898.pdf

“With the possibility of a SALK Virtual Visit, we are significantly improving the quality of care. Patients no longer have to travel to the clinic (usually accompanied by relatives) but can be treated in their own home environment. In addition, any waiting time can be bridged comfortably within their own “4 walls”. Especially in the current pandemic, this eliminates the risk of infection without compromising medical care.”



Prof. Dr. Jürgen Koehler
Medical Director University Hospital Salzburg,
Salzburger Landeskliniken GmbH



Platform integration

An important part of the project is to enable access to holistic medical data from inside and outside SALK for physicians with the help of the platform strategy, so that data silos and barriers are reduced. Since Siemens Healthineers has already created an IT-infrastructure for the introduction of ELGA¹ – and thus a corresponding data security concept – eHealth Virtual Visit can now be built on this and leverage the advantages of the platform where all relevant medical data for a consultation are at hand. In addition, a critical factor is certainly the compatibility of the various systems. Due to the strong focus on interoperability at Siemens Healthineers, this is ensured in the project.

Patient in the center

One of the main goals is to increase value for patients. Adding online consultations to the healthcare services offered by the Salzburger Landeskliniken will clearly bring many advantages and benefits for the patients:

It is much easier and more convenient for patients to make their follow-up appointments via eHealth Virtual Visit. Not only will they save the time and expense of long travel and waiting times associated with an outpatient appointment, but also they can make appointments conveniently, for example at home in their familiar surroundings.

This creates a new form of proximity to the patient. It is expected that patients will be more actively involved in the treatment process and can therefore take more responsibility for their own health. Patient engagement is thus increased, which in turn can have a positive effect on the recovering process.

In addition, outpatient clinics can be kept free and the risk of infection on site can be minimized.

A strong partner

The joint project of SALK and Siemens Healthineers offers many opportunities and possibilities to improve healthcare in the province of Salzburg with the help of digitalization. A learning process over the next few months will show that challenges can be overcome together, that eHealth Virtual Visit is an ideal solution to complement SALK's services, and that Siemens Healthineers is a strong partner at SALK's side to successfully implement the project.



“I expect this project to be a further step towards the digital healthcare setting. We have to make sure that patients receive adequate care at home – in terms of nursing and medical care.”

Thomas Gschwandtner
Nursing Manager,
Salzburger Landeskliniken GmbH

eHealth Solutions consist of several products of ITH icoserve technology for healthcare GmbH – A Siemens Healthineers Company, Innsbruck, Austria. Products of eHealth Solutions are not intended for diagnostic purposes. The product offerings are not commercially available in all countries. Please contact your local Siemens Healthineers organization for further information.

The statements by Siemens Healthineers' customers described herein are based on results that were achieved in the customer's unique setting. Because there is no "typical" hospital or laboratory and many variables exist (e.g., hospital size, samples mix, case mix, level of IT and/or automation adoption) there can be no guarantee that other customers will achieve the same results.

1 ELGA: Electronic Health Record Austria, was built as National Health Information Exchange to improve quality of care.

Siemens Healthineers Headquarters

Siemens Healthcare GmbH

Henkestr. 127

91052 Erlangen, Germany

Phone: +49 9131 84-0

siemens-healthineers.com