Remote Telemonitoring for Chronic Respiratory Illness Gains Ground in Portugal

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Dr. Luis Gonçalves, coordinator, Grupo de Trabalho de Telemedicina

How effective is remote telemonitoring for treating patients living with COPD and other chronic respiratory illnesses? Researchers in Portugal are working to answer that question through a set of pilot programs launched in 2014. Based on preliminary results, the practice appears more than promising, prompting health authorities to begin work on an initiative that will bring remote telemonitoring programs to patients throughout the country.

Challenge
To more effectively and cost-effectively serve the nearly 2 million people in Portugal who live with chronic respiratory illness, health authorities wanted to implement remote telemonitoring.

Solution
A working group within the country’s Health Ministry established remote telemonitoring pilot projects at multiple public hospitals to determine if remote telemonitoring was a good fit for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Results
After six months, preliminary results showed an average 50 percent reduction in hospital and ER admissions and widespread satisfaction with the practice among patients and clinicians.

Next Step
Health authorities have begun work toward implementing remote telemonitoring for chronic respiratory illness in a program expected to be in place sometime in 2016. If that program works as pilot evidence suggests, it could save the country significantly in yearly healthcare spending and improve patients’ quality of life.
Health authorities in Portugal are laying the groundwork for a nationwide initiative that could improve the lives of up to 2 million people living with chronic respiratory illnesses such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. With this initiative, the Health Ministry of Portugal will enable many of these individuals to self-monitor their vital signs from home or wherever they are, and transmit that information to their clinicians as effortlessly as slipping on a wristband and clicking the equivalent of a Send button.

Expected to be fully in place by sometime in 2016, the remote monitoring initiative will bring the practice to patients and their doctors at more than 75 hospitals throughout the country. The impact of the initiative could be significant, considering that each year chronic respiratory illnesses account for 20 percent of all hospital admissions and 4 million missed days of work or school, at a cost to the Portuguese economy of €240 million.

In fact, authorities have begun to grasp just how significant that impact could be, thanks to preliminary results from a set of pilot projects that began running in 2014. As Carvalho explains, at the start of the pilot he and his colleagues knew that the success of their work would depend in large part on the technology they selected. After considering their choices, they decided to deploy TactioRPM™, from Tactio Health Group, a remote patient monitoring platform that uses mobile apps and works with off-the-shelf connected health devices.

Carvalho says a key factor in his team’s decision was the platform’s support for existing smartphones and tablets. “We had already seen that older patients, who constitute much of the COPD population, were far more comfortable with tablets than with ordinary computers,” he says. Another factor was the platform’s wide support for dozens of health-data collection and monitoring devices from a diverse set of manufacturers. Yet another factor was the platform’s support for the call center.
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Dr. Paulo Lopes, pulmonologist, Coimbra Hospital

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50% average reduction in hospital and ER admissions

model of data delivery, in which clinical experts triage raw data to ensure its reliability before sending it on the hospital clinicians. Those AXA Assistance experts also provide rapid and often immediate feedback to patients who need it.

“With TactioRPM we have everything we want in a remote monitoring platform: support for the user-input devices that patients like, support for the health-data-collection devices that clinicians like, and support for the call center model that we believe works best for patients and clinicians alike,” Carvalho says. “We especially like the TactioRPM dashboard, which enables a given patient to be monitored by multiple clinicians, and vice versa.”

Six months of data, abundant evidence

According to Carvalho, just six months after launch the results easily exceeded expectations:

A 50 percent average reduction in hospital and ER admissions. Considering the cost of each hospital readmission (£4000 – average 10 days stay) and each ER visit (£1800), “This could represent a significant economic impact for hospitals,” Carvalho says.

Enhanced quality of life. Two patients
Clinician satisfaction. The two hospital clinicians in the pilot, both new to remote telemonitoring, speak highly of their experience in general and of the AXA Assistance call-center model and TactioRPM platform in particular. “The call-center model makes my job easier and my patients’ day-to-day lives more secure,” says Dr. Paulo Lopes, pulmonologist at Coimbra Hospital. “I would recommend remote telemonitoring to other doctors treating patients with COPD.”

“I consider remote telemonitoring a good fit for motivated patients in rehabilitation programs, especially to help them track their oximetry levels,” says Dr. Cidália Rodrigues, pulmonologist at Coimbra Hospital. “I also like the data presentation and ease of navigation provided by the TactioRPM platform on the iPad, as well as the immediate feedback that call-center experts are able to give to patients. The experience I have gained from this pilot is extremely important.”

Importance of the AXA Assistance call center model

Carvalho is delighted to learn that the clinicians liked the AXA Assistance call center model. “This model is not universally preferred among clinicians,” he says. “But after using it for six months, the Coimbra clinicians reported high levels of satisfaction with the model and its support for data quality over data quantity in terms of helping them to make decisions.”

That assessment is echoed by Ana Rita Cunha, business developer at Hope Care and project manager of the Coimbra pilot. “Based on this pilot, we consider the AXA Assistance call-center model, and the support for it provided by the TactioRPM platform, key to the successful implementation of remote telemonitoring,” she says. “The model is scalable, cost-effective, and avoids creating more work for the hospital clinicians. That is essential for providing successful remote telemonitoring to many of the 2 million people in Portugal who live with chronic respiratory illness.”

Enthusiasm and optimism

Based on his own observations of the pilot project, Dr. Gonçalves is optimistic about the future of remote monitoring for chronic respiratory illness. “Along with my colleagues at GTT, I am highly encouraged by the enthusiasm of the pilot participants,” he says. “The innovation and creativity of the service providers, the enthusiasm of the clinicians, and the openness of patients to this practice—all of this fuels our excitement about moving forward with the larger initiative.”

About Tactio Health Group

Tactio Health Group, founded in 2009, helps innovative healthcare organizations worldwide tap the power of mobile and connected health to improve clinical research, remote care workflows and patient engagement. The TactioRPM (remote patient monitoring) digital platform for health professionals and patients combines mobile apps, web tools, HIPAA-compliant, FDA Class 1 MDDS secured cloud services and vendor-agnostic connected health device integrations. TactioRPM is available as a complete end-to-end system and as a platform for innovative health care application developers to provide digital coaching for patients with hypertension, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive heart failure (CHF), atherosclerosis and obesity. Tactio apps have been downloaded by more than 4 million users in 135 countries and 17 languages.
TactioRPM™ FDA Class 1 MDDS Platform

Secured Cloud Based Platform Services and APIs

- **RPM700** – Secured Cloud
  HIPAA Secured Health Cloud & APIs

- **RPM7900** – Connected Health
  Connected Health Data Aggregator (CHDA) APIs

- **RPM7500** – Content
  Patient Educational Services
  Science-Based Health Coaching
  Patient Education Content LearnAPI

- **RPM7550** – Medical Rules
  Patient Educational Services
  Science-Based rules, ranges, colors and categories

- **RPM7600** – Engagement
  Patient Engagement Services
  Secured 2-way Messaging EngageAPI
  Health Appointments API

- **RPM7650** – Surveys
  Patient Survey API

Secured Mobile Health Apps

- **RPM6000** – Health Professionals
  Clinical Patient Monitoring Dashboard App
  (RPM6000i - iPad)

- **RPM1000** – Patients
  Patient Connected Health Tracking App
  RPM1000i (iOS) and RPM1000a (Android)
  Weight, Steps, Activity, Mood, Sleep, Nutrition, Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Atherosclerosis, Oximetry, Temperature and Blood Chemistry.

- **RPM7001** – SysAdmin
  RPM7000 Clinical Account and Group Management App (iOS with TouchID)

Secured Web Health Apps

- **RPM6000**
  Clinical Patient Monitoring Dashboard App

- **RPM6700**
  Anonymized Patient Data Export

- **RPM6750**
  De-identified Usability Reports

TactioRPM Platform

Design, develop, and deliver innovative mobile & web solutions for your health organization. The TactioRPM Platform offers all the tools, technologies, and server software necessary to create satisfying patient engagement and home health monitoring experiences. To learn more, go to:

www.tactiohealth.com/tactiorpm

AXA Assistance

AXA Assistance is among the world leaders in providing assistance, with near 1.3 billion euros annual revenue, 23 million euro underlying earnings and 9.4 million handled files in 2014. Wholly-owned by the AXA Group, AXA Assistance is the global assistance specialist provider in Automotive, Travel, Home, Health and Life Care Service.

For More Information

For more information about Tactio Health Group’s products and services, please call Tactio Sales Department at (514) 657 7628. Or for other information go to:

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