



EFN POSITION STATEMENT ON EHEALTH

The issue of e-Health has been brought to the fore of the EU health policy arena as part of the **e-Europe initiative**. Nurses must be a part of this initiative as emerging health care challenges such as the ageing population, staff shortages, and increasing health care expectations and rising health care costs are driving the demands for a more efficient, accessible, high-quality and affordable healthcare.

The EU Council of Ministers (2003) defines eHealth as the application of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to meet the needs of the populations: of patients, health personnel, health administrators and politicians. eHealth involves the applications of ICT within the whole range of stakeholders and functions that influence the health sector: patients, health personnel, hospitals, municipal health and social services, research and education, leadership and authorities.

The EFN welcomes the eHealth movement leading to an efficient and effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) that support patient care and clinical practice

Therefore, nurses, patients, and healthcare systems should gain from innovative eHealth applications. The EFN believes that:

- It is crucial that nurses are closely involved to ensure that developments are health-driven and not market-driven;
- It is important to provide patient centeredness and empowerment throughout the process of developing eHealth initiatives in order to protect patient safety and quality of care;
- Tele-health services should facilitate information between hospitals and the communities, streamline the delivery of nursing services, and reach out to remote areas;
- Patients' confidential data must be carefully monitored and stored so that their privacy is safeguarded;
- Nurses' eHealth skills must be identified as important and integrated into all levels of education, including the Continuous Development (CPD) programmes;
- It is necessary to develop EU quality and safety standards regarding new eHealth applications and nursing information systems, ensuring interoperability between Member States;
- Nurses must influence the development of technology reflecting both usability and user-friendliness;
- Integration of international terminologies (such as International Classification for Nursing Practice) in the electronic health record in order to achieve continuity, increase communication and secure relevant and reliable data about nursing practice and outcomes.

The EU community stands to gain considerable benefits from eHealth and ongoing involvement with the current trends should allow for a new, improved and efficient health care system to emerge within a stakeholder approach that can ensure its proper implementation.

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