

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Remote treatment ban gives way to the digital patient care

*May 10th, Erfurt. The 121st German Medical Congress approved the proposal to relax the ban on remote treatment. From now on, medical treatments and consultations in individual cases may also be carried out exclusively via telemedia such as telephone, video conference or SMS.*

According to §7 para. 4 of the Model Occupational Regulations, therapies or even diagnoses via telecommunications media have so far been fundamentally prohibited, although exceptions have already been practiced. The Patient Protection Foundation warns against a dulling of the quality of treatment. On the other side numerous citizens get themselves long ago advice in Internet forums, use worry telephones and addiction Hotlines, exchange mutually medicine experiences and advise over therapy-accompanying measures. Last but not least, doctors themselves use digital media for the remote transmission of x-rays, laboratory values and findings in order to coordinate with each other. So the possibilities are there, now also the official recognition.

"The doctors have made a clear decision in favour of telemedicine," said Thuringia's State Medical Association President Ellen Lundershausen. The conclusion of the conference was that digital communication should complement, not disrupt, the doctor-patient relationship. This opens up promising possibilities for practices, hospitals, on-call services and institutions. If it is medically justifiable and the duty of care in diagnosis, consultation and documentation is maintained, the patient may now be cared for exclusively by telemedia, i.e. in individual cases also without personal first contact.

The lack of physicians in rural regions, long waiting times, journeys and the sheer effort to go

to a physician are only a few of the reasons to push forward the change in medical care. Digital development should not stop at patient care, of all things, but should now accompany modern medicine communicatively. This includes forms of treatment such as teleconsultation (e.g. video/telephone consultations), tediagnosis (e.g. image and data transmission) and telemonitoring (e.g. monitoring of values by data transmission), whereby the doctor can get a better picture of the patient's condition. At the same time, the number of SMS notifications is increasing. Countless practices already use the service of professional SMS providers such as sms77 to contact their patients individually or fully automatically. Be it as a reminder of the next routine examination, collection notices for prescriptions, appointment confirmations or the announcement of courses and events, such as blood donation campaigns. The high reachability rate, the uncomplicated handling even with older mobile phone models and above all the secure transmission of data protection relevant contents speak for the trust that patients can build up with it to their doctor.

On the subject of trust, the new Data Protection Ordinance, which comes into force on 25 May, simultaneously adds to the lively need for discussion that now prevails in many waiting rooms. The remote exchange between doctor and patient is, of course, subject to a high degree to the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the requirements of which must be complied with in the technical implementation through web platforms, apps, video and audio transmission.

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