Title: Telemedicine in North-West Russia

Website: www.telemed.no

Duration: 01/1997 – 12/2001

Region: The parts of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region: Arkhangelsk county in Russia, Troms county in Northern Norway

Lead Partner/Partners: Russia
1.) The Health Department of Arkhangelsk Regional Administration, Arkhangelsk; 2.) The Regional Hospital of Arkhangelsk (RHA), Arkhangelsk; 3.) The Regional Children's Hospital, Arkhangelsk; 4.) Hospital in Kotlas city; 5.) The Central Hospital in Velsk; 6.) Hospital in Korjazma; 7.) The Children Hospital in Severodvinsk; 8.) The Central Hospital, Onega; 9.) Northern State Medical University, Arkhangelsk

Norway
1.) Norwegian Centre for Telemedicine (NST)/ WHO Collaborating centre, University Hospital of North Norway (UNN), Tromsoe; 2) University in Tromsoe

Background: Initial discussions about telemedicine collaboration between Norway and Arkhangelsk began as far back as 1992-93. The Barents Region encouraged collaboration in many fields, and health was one of the most important areas. In the course of several friendship and “getting-to-know-you” visits to Russia, health care workers agreed that telemedicine was an area in which they wished to collaborate. Many joint projects were started between the University Hospital of North Norway and health institutions in Arkhangelsk. In 1997, the National Centre of Telemedicine (NST) received its first funding for the project “Telemedicine in North-West Russia”.

Aims: The main objective of the project was to examine and improve communication and the mutual exchange of information between health care personnel in Norway and Russia, and within Arkhangelsk Oblast, in order to improve access to health care for the population of outlying districts; to contribute to improving the skills and effectiveness of health care workers in Arkhangelsk Oblast by means of improved communication between health care institutions within the region; and to facilitate the sharing of competence and knowledge between health workers in Arkhangelsk Oblast and Northern Norway.

Target groups: - Persons of all age groups, - Multiplicators: teachers at Universities, Medical Colleges; Medical Personnel: doctors, nurses, midwives, OTs, bioengineers; rescue services, disaster control personnel; decision makers in the field of: health; Patients in the field of: various; Others: medical students; - not gender-specific

Description/Methods: The project was organized according to the matrix principle: people employed in other fields at NST have been involved in the project as experts and advisors in their particular specialties. A wide range of health personnel at the University Hospital of North Norway (UNN) – nurses, bioengineers, occupational therapists, doctors, and pharmacists – have taken an active role in the project, mainly in relation to the distance learning programme. Lecturers at the University of Tromsø and Tromsø University College have also contributed to the distance learning programme, as have health personnel from Tromsø Municipality. The project was organized as a joint venture between the two countries, and
responsibilities and authority were divided along clear lines of accountability. Detailed agreements were drawn up for certain key aspects of the project, such as the placement of equipment and agreement on the procedures for evaluation. Otherwise, the division of responsibilities and authority has been established during working meetings between the parties. A timescale was created for the implementation of the project. Detailed schedules are described in the individual applications. During the course of the project, the schedule was continually revised in response to the situation in Russia and other external factors. Changes in the project timetable have been reported to the funding authorities on a regular basis.

Results:

- The regional telemedical network in Arkhangelsk Oblast is in a status of routine everyday use.
- The number of telemedicine consultations in Arkhangelsk Oblast is increasing.
- The report on the financial consequences of using telemedicine in Arkhangelsk Oblast has been completed.
- The report on user satisfaction with the introduction of the still-image network in Arkhangelsk Oblast has been completed.
- The videoconferencing communication system is in use.
- The use of mobile telemedicine units in regions with poorly developed infrastructure has been recorded.
- The project has increased medical and technical expertise in both Norway and Russia.
- Effective communication between Northern Norway and Arkhangelsk Oblast has increased and intensified.
- The localized version of Norwegian store-and-forward telemedicine supportive software DORIS has been developed, tested and introduced.

This project shows that telemedicine has positive effects which go far beyond the concrete activities of the project. The project has been of great importance for cross-border communication and collaboration between health care staff. Health workers on both sides of the border have increased their expertise in ICT.

The telemedicine network can be used in specialized areas, such as TB control, and the communication links can be used for training, planning, and following up joint projects in all areas, not just in the health sector. The videoconference link is an important service for anyone engaged in collaboration within the Barents Region, whether in business, teaching, research or health. A complete presentation of the project, its results, and both the positive and negative aspects of the way the project was conducted might contribute valuable recommendations and form the basis of a “recipe” which might be a help to anybody in the initial phases of new projects in Russia and elsewhere.

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