



German insurer launches glaucoma telemedicine

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German health insurance company Techniker Krankenkasse (TK) is to provide patients with a Glaucoma telemedicine monitoring programme as a mainstream service.

It is the first telemonitoring service for glaucoma patients that is offered by a German health insurance company as part of its routine patient care.

"It is explicitly meant as not being a model project", TK-spokesman Harald Kriednau told E-Health Europe.

The goal is to better customise medication therapy to the individual needs of the patient and thus prevent irreversible damage to the retina.

At the moment, the service is restricted to the German Federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, a rural state on the Baltic shore.

The contract is between TK and Greifswald university hospital, an innovative e-health institution that runs a multidisciplinary telemedicine centre to provide better care for patients in the countryside and on the Baltic islands.

Glaucoma patients that want to use the telemonitoring service are seen at least once by a specialist at the department for ophthalmology at Greifswald university hospital. After confirmation of the glaucoma diagnosis, the patient receives a small suitcase.

The suitcase contains all necessary equipment for the telemedicine measurement of the intraocular pressure (IOP). The equipment used is a relatively easy to use electronic pressure sensor that is held on the surface of the eye, and a modem that transmits the data via phone line to an electronic patient record (EPR).

The data is sent to a web-based EPR that can be accessed both by the specialist and by the patient's GP.

"The patient receives an individual schedule for his measurements. At one day in a week, he has to perform three measurements in the morning and another three in the evening. In addition to that, once a month a 24-hour profile of the intraocular pressure and of the arterial blood pressure is recorded", said Volker Löws, head of TK in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The measurements are done for three months in a row. During this time, the pressure lowering medication is customised to the individual needs. This normally results in a stable decrease of the IOP. In cases of further instability, the telemonitoring period can be extended.

Professor Frank Tost, head of ophthalmology at Greifswald University, estimates that in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania alone about 17,000 people suffer from glaucoma. Since the target group for the project is customers of TK only, there should be some one thousand potential candidates for the new treatment option at this stage.

Link

[More information on the project](#) (German language only)

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