WHA58.28 eHealth

The Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on eHealth;[1]

Noting the potential impact that advances in information and communication technologies could have on health-care delivery, public health, research and health-related activities for the benefit of both low- and high-income countries;

Aware that advances in information and communication technologies have raised expectations for health;

Respecting human rights, ethical issues and the principles of equity, and considering differences in culture, education, language, geographical location, physical and mental ability, age, and sex;

Recognizing that a WHO eHealth strategy would serve as a basis for WHO's activities on eHealth;

Recalling resolution WHA51.9 on cross-border advertising, promotion, and sale of medical products through the Internet;

Stressing that eHealth is the cost-effective and secure use of information and communications technologies in support of health and health-related fields, including health-care services, health surveillance, health literature, and health education, knowledge and research,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to consider drawing up a long-term strategic plan for developing and implementing eHealth services in the various areas of the health sector, including health administration, which would include an appropriate legal framework and infrastructure and encourage public and private partnerships;

(2) to develop the infrastructure for information and communication technologies for health as deemed appropriate to promote equitable, affordable, and universal access to their benefits, and to continue to work with information and telecommunication agencies and other partners in order to reduce costs and make eHealth successful;

(3) to build on closer collaboration with the private and non-profit sectors in information and communication technologies, so as to further public services for health and make use of the eHealth services of WHO and other health organizations, and to seek their support in the area of eHealth;

(4) to endeavour to reach communities, including vulnerable groups, with eHealth services appropriate to their needs;

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[1] Document A58/21.

(5)   to mobilize multisectoral collaboration for determining evidence-based eHealth standards and norms, to evaluate eHealth activities, and to share the knowledge of cost-effective models, thus ensuring quality, safety and ethical standards and respect for the principles of confidentiality of information, privacy, equity and equality;

(6)   to establish national centres and networks of excellence for eHealth best practice, policy coordination, and technical support for health-care delivery, service improvement, information to citizens, capacity building, and surveillance;

(7)   to consider establishing and implementing national electronic public-health information systems and to improve, by means of information, the capacity for surveillance of, and rapid response to, disease and public-health emergencies;

2.   REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1)   to promote international, multisectoral collaboration with a view to improving compatibility of administrative and technical solutions and ethical guidelines in the area of eHealth;

(2)   to expand the use of electronic information through the submission of regular reports, to document and analyse developments and trends, to inform policy and practice in countries, and to report regularly on use of eHealth worldwide;

(3)   to facilitate the development of model eHealth solutions which, with appropriate modification, could be established in national centres and networks of excellence for eHealth;

(4)   to provide technical support to Member States in relation to eHealth products and services by disseminating widely experiences and best practices, in particular on telemedicine technology, devising assessment methodologies, promoting research and development, and furthering standards through diffusion of guidelines;

(5)   to facilitate the integration of eHealth in health systems and services, including in the deployment of telemedicine infrastructure in countries where medical coverage is inadequate, in the training of health-care professionals, and in capacity building, in order to improve access to, and quality and safety of, care;

(6)   to continue the expansion to Member States of mechanisms such as the Health Academy, which promote health awareness and healthy lifestyles through eLearning;[1]

(7)   to provide support to Member States to promote the development, application and management of national standards of health information; and to collect and collate available information on standards with a view to establishing national standardized health information systems in order to facilitate easy and effective exchange of information among Member States;

(8)   to support in the area of eHealth regional and interregional initiatives or those among groups of countries that speak a common language;

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[1] eLearning is understood in this context to mean use of any electronic technology and media in support of learning.

(9)   to submit to the Executive Board, at its 117th session, a list of proposed specific activities upon which the Secretariat will focus, which should be entirely aimed at tools and services that Member States can incorporate into their own national solutions or adapt as necessary, and an outline of the budgetary implications of proposed activities.

(Ninth plenary meeting, 25 May 2005 –
Committee A, seventh report)