

PCC.I/RES. 152 (XIV-09) ¹

SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT ON CREATION OF THE “TELEHEALTH NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS”

The XIV Meeting of Permanent Consultative Committee I: Telecommunications,

HAVING SEEN:

- a) That at the Second Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government underscored that countries should identify existing and emerging matters through greater use of communication technology and health surveillance, and that the Third Summit of the Americas held in Quebec, Canada, accorded particular importance to telemedicine;
- b) That Resolution CCP.I/RES. 24 (III-03) approved the Book on “Telemedicine in the Americas,” which was jointly prepared by PCC.I, the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU/BDT), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Latin American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunication Enterprises (AHCJET),

BEARING IN MIND:

- a) The submission of the project “Telehealth Network of the Americas,” which is a proposal for integration; joint work and collaboration among governmental institutions, medical schools, hospitals, international organizations and NGOs, to which each actor brings their experience and expertise to help those in need, regardless of their location and situation in the region;
- b) That this project gives particular attention to aspects to do with content, procedural guidelines, standards and interoperability of measures rather than to equipment and its connectivity options,

UNDERSCORING:

- a) That the overriding objective of the Project “Telehealth in the Americas” is to create a telehealth network in the Region in which successful experiences are brought together, local initiatives with potential for region-wide implementation are strengthened, existing apparatus and connectivity can be harnessed and essentially capitalize on the contents and diagnostic appraisals of professionals, health services, and the region’s hospitals willing to join the Network;
- b) That this project will enable vulnerable populations to benefit both economically and geographically, strengthening continuous education processes through discussion clinics, diagnostic collaboration between health professionals and long distance learning strategies that utilize information and communications technology (ITC) amongst peers;
- c) That the creation of this network in the region will enrich, strengthen and benefit continual updating of the publication OAS/CITEL / ITU / PAHO / AHCJET “Telehealth in the Americas” published in 2003,

¹ CCP.I-TEL/doc. 1687/09 rev.1

RESOLVING:

1. To support the Project on creation of the “Telehealth Network of the Americas” set out in the annex to this Resolution.
2. To request support from the administrations of CITELE Member States in linking their respective countries to the project.
3. To designate Mr. Marcelo Petrich, of the Administration of Argentina, as coordinator of activities to be carried out within the framework of the project.
4. To present a work plan for the project’s implementation to the XV meeting of CCP.I that includes information on the resources required.
5. To underscore that the project will be carried out without recourse to the CITELE budget.
4. To instruct the CITELE Executive Secretary to carry out relevant coordination within OAS, the ITU and other health-sector bodies from the inter-American system in order to gain support for the project implementation.

ANNEX TO RESOLUTION PCC.I/RES. 152 (XIV-09)

TELEHEALTH NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS PROJECT

I. PROPOSAL DETAILS

1. Name: Telehealth Network of the Americas
2. Presented by: Argentina
3. Beneficiary countries

All OAS Member States will be invited to participate in the project.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Description:

The “Telehealth Network of the Americas” project is a program for integration, joint work and collaboration among government institutions, medical schools, hospitals and NGOs, to which each actor brings their experience and expertise, forming a solid and experienced work group serving those in need, regardless of their location and situation.

It gives particular attention to aspects to do with content, procedural guidelines, standards and interoperability of measures rather than to equipment and its connectivity options, and is conscious that the most important part of the network are the nodes that make it up and its academic commitment to meeting objectives, rather than the budget available for equipment.

In the same way we believe that the involvement of local actors, international bodies, government institutions, medical schools, hospitals and civil society, means the way in which this type of project will operate and develop can be considered with more confidence, where its concrete actions will be appreciated over the medium and long term.

We have been able to observe important projects of this type in the region and in our own countries dependent on a single institution. During moments of political or economic instability, its priority and importance in local agendas suffer.

Objectives:

The general objective of the “Telehealth Network of the Americas” project is, as its name suggests, to create a telehealth network in the region in which successful experiences are brought together, local initiatives with potential for region-wide implementation are strengthened, existing apparatus and connectivity can be harnessed and essentially capitalize on the contents and diagnostic appraisals of professionals, health services and the region’s hospitals willing to join the Network.

Optimizing existing equipment, spreading awareness of best practices, and learning from mistakes enables us to develop, embed and operate an integrated telehealth system supported by information technology that aims to improve and expand health service delivery via national, regional and international telehealth networks.

Without doubt this will enable vulnerable populations to benefit both economically and geographically, strengthening continuous education processes through discussion clinics, diagnostic collaboration between health professionals and long distance learning strategies that utilize ITC amongst peers.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify best local practices of each country in the region, based on the CITEL publication “Telehealth of the Americas”.
- Identify, call upon and integrate the various local and regional actors in the field in order to establish a specific work group.
- Integrate and coordinate regulatory aspects, technical protocols, doctors, clinics, ethics and legalities in domestic environments, to establish measures comparative with existing indicators established by international bodies, OAS/CITEL, ITU, PAHO, WHO, amongst others in their distinct committees. This allows the “Telehealth Network of the Americas” to lay the foundation for the preparation of an interoperability manual on the subject, covering all the aforementioned indicators.
- Develop general and diagnostic guides for each specialty and their prevailing pathologies, in order to pre-establish clinical parameters for the approach of due treatments.
- Develop a technological platform for secondary consultations, computerized patient record system (CPRS) and collaborative work between health professionals.
- Prepare procedure manuals and operating standards for telemedicine equipment, videoconferencing, remote telemedicine doctors, operating guides, and equipments to be homologated.

- Regarding connectivity, the intention is to prepare a Connectivity Guide where the various options offered by the market in each country can be analyzed (IP, ISDN, satellites), from its fixed-line, mobile and cellular phone options in every form. This enables the setting of Recommendation criteria for the utilization of each option and the best performance level that can be expected from the connectivity being used.
- Involve and integrate lecturers, hospital managers and experts of various medical specialties in order to form the network's own team of experts who can respond and complete secondary consultations.
- Collaborate and participate together with local governments and health and communications ministries in the Preparation and Training of the population regarding access to prevention programs and health service delivery supported by the telemedicine network and medical groups, as well as to medical groups and health professionals.
- Encourage and promote the design of preventative health measures and provide the platform with special programs linked to health problems specific to each region (dengue fever, chagas disease, etc).
- Create a portal that publicizes advances in the field containing information on specific areas; secondary diagnostic consultations, continuous tele-epidemiology education and aspects and advances related to Basic and Clinical Research. The portal looks to promote the integration of all health and educational bodies in the country as well as promoting interaction between health professionals.
- The creation of this network in the region will enrich, strengthen and benefit the ongoing updating of the OAS/CITEL / ITU / PAHO / AHCIEP publication "Telehealth in the Americas" published in 2003.

Aims:

The aims of the project are defined by stages.

1. The First Stage involves evaluation and identification of best local practices in each country in the region, based on the OAS/CITEL / ITU / PAHO / AHCIEP publication "Telehealth in the Americas".
2. The Second Stage will integrate, coordinate and shape the "Telehealth Network of the Americas" and development of the telehealth network of the Americas portal covering secondary diagnostic consultations, continuous education, tele-epidemiology and basic and clinical research.
3. The Third Stage covers the preparation and training of the population regarding access to prevention programs as well as to medical groups and health professionals.
4. The Fourth Stage
 - 4.1 General and diagnostic guides for each specialty and their prevailing pathologies.
 - 4.2 Preparation of procedure and operating standards manuals.
 - 4.3 Connectivity guide.
 - 4.4 Develop a technological platform for secondary consultations, computerized patient record system (CPRS) and collaborative work between health professionals.
 - 4.5 Formation of the network's own team of health and clinical experts.

5. The Fifth Stage; revision and updating of the OAS/CITEL / ITU / PAHO / AHCET publication “Telehealth in the Americas”.

Principal Beneficiaries:

Principal beneficiaries include people, individuals or populations who find themselves living in vulnerable situations either as a result of physical, economic or geographical circumstances and cannot access services that deliver health promotion, prevention or secondary diagnostic consultations approved by teaching staff from medical schools.

At the same time the health professional community will have a tool for accessing continuous education, a means of interaction with other colleagues and access to collaborative work carried out amongst peers.

This will without doubt result in a better qualified professional that isolated populations lack and are unable to access any other way.

Expected Results:

The intention of this project is to identify and maximize telehealth activities in America that make a genuine impact in their field and are carried out in line with cooperative and inclusive working approaches. It serves as a medium for optimizing efforts, without superimposing strategies, and therefore achieves maximum success over the medium and long term.

The secret to these programs is for them to be sustainable, to stand the test of time and to outlive administrations. Ideally they should last beyond the various political changes in institutions that occur in our countries.

In this sense we believe that the mixed administration model is a very good resource, as well as the analysis of strategies and policies that help favor access to knowledge networks, various platforms and solutions, and therefore work towards reducing the social divide that will undoubtedly reduce the digital divide.

Sustainability

The institution proposing the project, together with counterpart institutions from countries making up the telehealth network that belong to OAS Member States, will look to mobilize appropriate mechanisms to provide participant countries with sufficient institutional capacity to channel national and international funds that serve to sustain the project.

Equally, the project proposes to promote the drafting and implementation of government policies in order to enhance the project sustainability. It also intends to announce results at high level meetings and forums in order to improve awareness of commitments made by different sectors directly and indirectly related to the project objectives. Likewise, sub-regional bodies will be involved during the project implementation process in order to contribute to its sustainability within their respective regions.