

Healthcare & Life Sciences - Turkey

Ministry of Health announces e-pulse project

Contributed by **Gün + Partners**

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Introduction

E-pulse project

Comment

Introduction

A previous update pointed out that e-health services promise a more efficient service and reduced government expenditure (for further details please see "E-health services: a new era").

In Communiqué 2015/5, the Ministry of Health recently announced the start of an e-pulse project which aims to provide:

- improved health services (by reducing the length of diagnosis and treatment);
- prevent the repetition of unnecessary examinations; and
- reduce government expenditure.

The e-pulse project will in principle allow people to place their digital health data online.

When establishing the system, the Ministry of Health, among other things, referred to Article 3 of the Fundamental Law on Health Services (Law 3359), which notes that "Necessary registration and tracking systems are established to track peoples' health status and conditions", and stated that the ministry has the authority and duty to facilitate these tracking systems.

E-pulse project

Under the project, people will be allowed to manage their own data in line with Article 20 of the Constitution. Further, they will have the right to request amendments to or the deletion of the data or for it to be deleted. Confidentiality is an important component of the project and the ministry has stated that data will be encrypted and people will be able to access their data only by entering their e-government password. The ministry has called this a 'personal health system'.

In addition to the personal health system, there will be a 'teleradiology and telemedicine system' through which physicians may access online health data with the patient's permission. Only an authorised doctor will be allowed to access this personal data. Further, the patient's authorisation can be withdrawn at any time. However, the ministry has said that patient permission is not mandatory in emergency cases.

Further, the ministry has stated that no matter where health services have been provided, people will be able to manage their own personal health data. This data will be saved on a single platform and accessed only to the extent permitted by its owner. Above all, the system aims to facilitate a more efficient network of communication between patients and doctors.

Comment

Technology is becoming ever further integrated into health services. As long as the confidentiality of personal health data is provided and maintained, these systems will undoubtedly contribute to the efficiency, speed and accuracy of health services compared to traditional methods and practices. It is also clear that health data is attractive for companies in the pharmaceutical and insurance sectors. However, there is a question mark over whether the existing legal structure, particularly considering the

lack of a national law protecting personal data in Turkey, will be enough to safeguard the confidentiality of personal health data.

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