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INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION
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Good Practices in Social Security

Good practice in operation since: 2015

Substitution of insurance booklets with electronic prescription

Iranian Social Security Organization
Islamic Republic of Iran

Summary

Due to rising health costs especially the cost of medicine, and in order to promote the quality of health services, it is highly necessary to consider solutions such as strategic purchasing of health services aimed at cost control and decreasing the fiscal burden as well as preventing medical errors.

In line with high level targets of the Iranian Social Security Organization (SSO) to facilitate and expedite processes, increase system efficiency and meet the e-government goals, the planning and implementing of an “electronic prescription” scheme came on the agenda.

This widely popular green scheme not only led to savings of tons of paper but also caused considerable changes in the process of medical prescriptions, easy monitoring of service provision, less time consuming for contractors and reduction and total elimination of medical errors.

Because of being the first purchaser as well as second provider of medical and health services, and as a pioneer in promoting technical and scientific aspects of services in Iran, the SSO has delivered the e-prescription service and is now the first organization to provide more than 50 million beneficiaries with this kind of service.

The issue or challenge

What was the issue or challenge addressed by your good practice? Please provide a short description.

Most important issues and challenges:

- High cost of paper prescriptions.
- Possible errors.
- Uncontrollable processes.
- Possible fraud and cheating.

Addressing the challenge

What were the main objectives of the plan or strategy to resolve the issue or challenge? List and briefly describe the main elements of the plan or strategy, focusing especially on their innovative feature(s) and expected or intended effects.

To keep pace with technology and substitute e-prescriptions for paper prescriptions, many issues were taken into consideration:

- A two-year study:
 - a feasibility study;
 - a trial plan in both direct and indirect health fields, including 370 health centres;
 - creation of infrastructures;

- training courses;
- Legal authentication of digital signatures.

Targets to be achieved

What were the quantitative and/or qualitative targets or key performance indicators that were set for the plan or strategy? Please describe briefly.

These outcomes are overriding of importance:

- Minimizing and controlling health costs.
- Creating electronic health files.
- Promoting quality of health services.
- Preventing fraud.
- Improving client satisfaction.
- Easy access to health background of contributors.
- Legal authentication of digital signatures.

Evaluating the results

Has there been an evaluation of the good practice? Please provide data on the impact and outcomes of the good practice by comparing targets vs actual performance, before-and-after indicators, and/or other types of statistics or measurements.

- Issuance of more than 60 million e-prescriptions: About 95 per cent of prescriptions issued by SSO health services in the last year were issued electronically.
- About 40 per cent reduction in the cost of printing health insurance booklets.
- Millions of papers were saved (in terms of environmental protection policies).
- Full and comprehensive control and monitoring of multiple prescriptions and medicine interactions.
- Straightforward data to develop strategies and policies.
- Considerable client satisfaction on the new electronic methods (85 per cent of the clients).

Lessons learned

Based on the organization's experience, name up to three factors which you consider as indispensable to replicate this good practice. Name up to three risks that arose/could arise in implementing this good practice. Please explain these factors and/or risks briefly.

Lessons:

- Possible to be replicated by another insurance organization to eliminate health insurance booklets.
- Possible to develop and update the health strategies by having access to straightforward databases including precise, reliable and updated data.
- Possible to create electronic health file including all the data on medical and health data and references, to provide the clients with better and more effective services.

Challenges:

- The scheme requires infrastructures including safe communication channels.
- Cultural training requirements and comprehensive collaboration of all medical staff and clients.
- Legal challenges (elimination of health documents) and financial challenges (elimination of papers used as financial documents).