

PROJECT

SMART PATIENTS

Holistic Emporwerment of Citizens to Become Experts
in Their Own Health

Autores: Sílvia Fernandes^{1,2}, Ângelo Jesus^{2,3}, Brígida Patrício⁴, Cristina Melo^{5,6},
Diana Tavares^{6,7}, Smart Patients team & Regina A Silva^{1,2}

¹ Área Técnico-Científica Anatomia Patológica, Citológica e Tanatológica, Escola Superior de Saúde do Porto, Politécnico do Porto (ESS | P. PORTO); ² Centro de Investigação em Saúde e Ambiente (CISA), ESS | P. PORTO; ³ Área Técnico-Científica de Farmácia, ESS | P. PORTO; ⁴ Área Técnico-Científica de Terapia da Fala, ESS | P. PORTO; ⁵ Área Técnico-Científica de Fisioterapia, ESS | P. PORTO; ⁶ Centro de Investigação em Reabilitação (CIR), ESS | P. PORTO; ⁷ Área Técnico-Científica de Neurofisiologia, ESS | P. PORTO

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Resumo

Introdução: Alinhado com o Quadro Estratégico da UE para a Saúde, o projeto Smart Patients tem como principal objetivo capacitar os cidadãos, colocando-os no centro do sistema e envolvendo-os na gestão da sua própria saúde. Assim, o projeto visa aumentar o grau de literacia em saúde dos cidadãos, desenvolvendo as suas competências e autoconfiança na gestão das suas necessidades de saúde.

Métodos: O projeto foi coordenado localmente pela ESS | P. PORTO, com a participação de 5 Áreas Técnico-Científicas, em colaboração com o consórcio de sete países europeus, e decorreu no período entre 01/09/2016 e 31/10/2018.

Resultados: Como resultado deste projeto, foram criados materiais de sensibilização, orientação e informação para os cidadãos; uma plataforma online para partilha de materiais e ferramentas; uma página web e folhetos informativos; e um aplicativo móvel. Todos os materiais foram traduzidos em vários idiomas e amplamente divulgados.

Conclusão: É expectável que os produtos e conteúdos desenvolvidos tenham um forte impacto na capacitação da saúde dos cidadãos europeus.

Abstract

Introduction: In line with the EU Strategic Framework for Health, the main objective of the Smart Patients project is to empower citizens, placing them at the center of the system and involving them in the management of their own health. Thus, the project aims to empower citizens with better health literacy, developing their skills and self-confidence in managing their health needs.

Methods: Project was coordinated locally by ESS | P. PORTO, with the participation of 5 Technical-Scientific Areas, in collaboration with the consortium of seven European countries, in the period between 09/01/2016 and 10/31/2018.

Results: As a result of this project, materials were created to raise awareness, guidance and information for citizens; an online platform for sharing available materials and tools; webpage and information leaflets; and a mobile app. All materials were translated in multiple languages and widely circulated.

Conclusion: Appropriate products and contents are expected to have a strong impact on the health empowerment of European citizens.

Introduction

The Smart Patients project addresses an important topic of Health literacy by the means of non-formal education, i.e. it empowers citizens to acquire health literacy, and to understand that health cannot be maintained only by medical intervention, but depends also on lifestyle as well as on social and environmental factors.

The design of the learning materials takes into consideration not only the educational level of disadvantaged learners, but it also responds to the current refugees' crisis in Europe, by providing selected materials in the two most widely used languages of refugees, i.e. Arabic and Pashtun.

A concrete theme identified in the EU Health Strategy includes empowering citizens – putting patients at the heart of the system and encouraging them to be involved in managing their own healthcare needs. Preventive care should

therefore not be left alone to doctors and hospitals, also the individual must be empowered and become a “smart patient”.

The objectives of this project were:

- To empower citizens to become expert patients and to develop self-confidence and patients competence in interaction with medical experts;
- To develop support that empowers them preventing disease and detecting health issues at an early stage that are essential to living a healthy life;
- To develop internet and mobile application based tools with recommendations, advices and guidelines for preventive care, healthy nutrition and food, wellbeing, lifestyle;
- To provide a glossary that explains medical terms for readers with lower educational levels
- To reach refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who have no or only little command of the host country’s language and would not understand the information given to them by doctors, through translations of the materials also into Arabic and Pashtun.

Profile of the partners

The partnership comprises of a multi-disciplinary team of health organizations, education and pedagogic expert partners as well as ICT and multimedia specialists, where only the combined efforts made possible the results of the project. In a world of globalization, the project will therefore develop transnational best practice approaches and transfer them into localized solutions in the eight European states of the partnership and beyond.

The group of social and medical research organizations specialized in various aspects of health care consists of: 1 - MEDRI - Department for psychiatry and psychological medicine of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka (Croatia), offering education programs in the field of psychological medicine, psychiatry and communication skills; 2- NUIG - Health Promotion Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, known by producing high quality research that supports the development of best practice and policy in the promotion of health; 3- „Was hab ich?“ (a German non-profit organisation) provides, with their online portal, free of charge translations of medical reports and hospital discharge summaries; 4- ESTSP - School of Allied Health Technologies (Portugal) is an applied sciences higher education institution with a strong human, technological and ethical capital dedicated to the development of health technologies; 5-

INTEGRA Institute for Development of Human Potentials (Slovenia), with specialized counsellors from the field of special pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy, social work and systemic humanistic psychotherapy; 6 - WIN – Science Initiative Lower Austria has extensive experience in the design of learning and information materials for ICT communication in virtual environments; 7 - QUALED Qualification and Education (Slovakia) is active in the field of innovative learning technologies for supporting learning processes in different settings for different target groups; 8- GUNET (Greece), with expertise in the development and provision of advanced ICT services and applications in teaching and learning.

Activities and Results

Needs assessment

The first step to reach these objectives was mapping the state of art in Europe and in individual countries of the partnership, analyzing them and find a common starting point for developing the educational materials. Thus, a Needs Assessment Report was made through desk-based research, which included the analyses and discussions on the current state of art, best practices, pedagogical approaches and the needs of the target groups in the countries of the partnership: Croatia, Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia. This report was of utmost importance for the beginning of the project, as it guided the work all over the project, including production, testing and implementation of educational materials.

Development of information and training materials/content

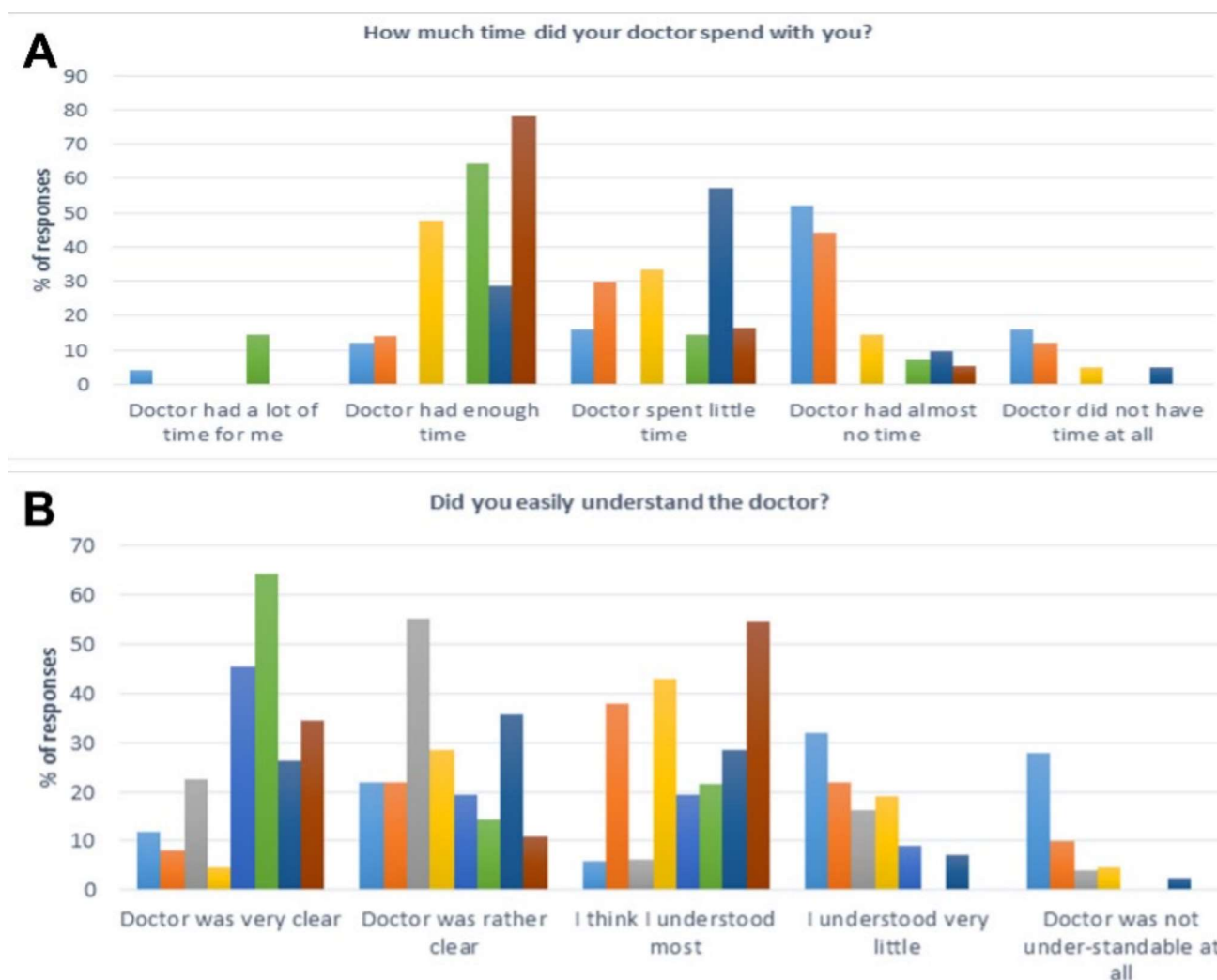
The field research focused on the identification of the needs of both individuals and stakeholders with respect to the desired educational materials for smart patients, considering also the adjustment of the technological development concerning the target groups in such tools.

The first step of the field research were the discussions with focus groups. In each country, there were established focus groups comprising of experts from healthcare organizations, science education institutions, adult education providers and citizens, who took part in the focus groups discussions during the framework analysis phase.

The second step was the production distributing, and analysing questionnaires, which targeted two groups: experts in the healthcare field and individuals. The questionnaires aimed to investigate the health status of the patients and knowledge of the existing online tools. The results of the questionnaires were

analysed on national level in the national reports and on the European level in this final report. The focus groups included 6-10 participants representing all the target groups and stakeholders. There was a discussion followed by interviews with selected members of the target groups and stakeholders.

The needs assessment analysis showed that the results provided by the experts are extremely clear about the need of online health information platforms (20% of the experts don't know they even exist) and that patients should have a better basic medical knowledge. For those reasons, the implementation of an online health information platform could be extremely useful. Moreover, we can highlight that in each country, members of the public had a more positive view than professionals, both of their physical and mental/emotional health. Some of the results of questionnaires administered to target groups are shown on **Figure 1** - results of the patients (**A** and **B**) and experts/stakeholders (**C** and **D**).



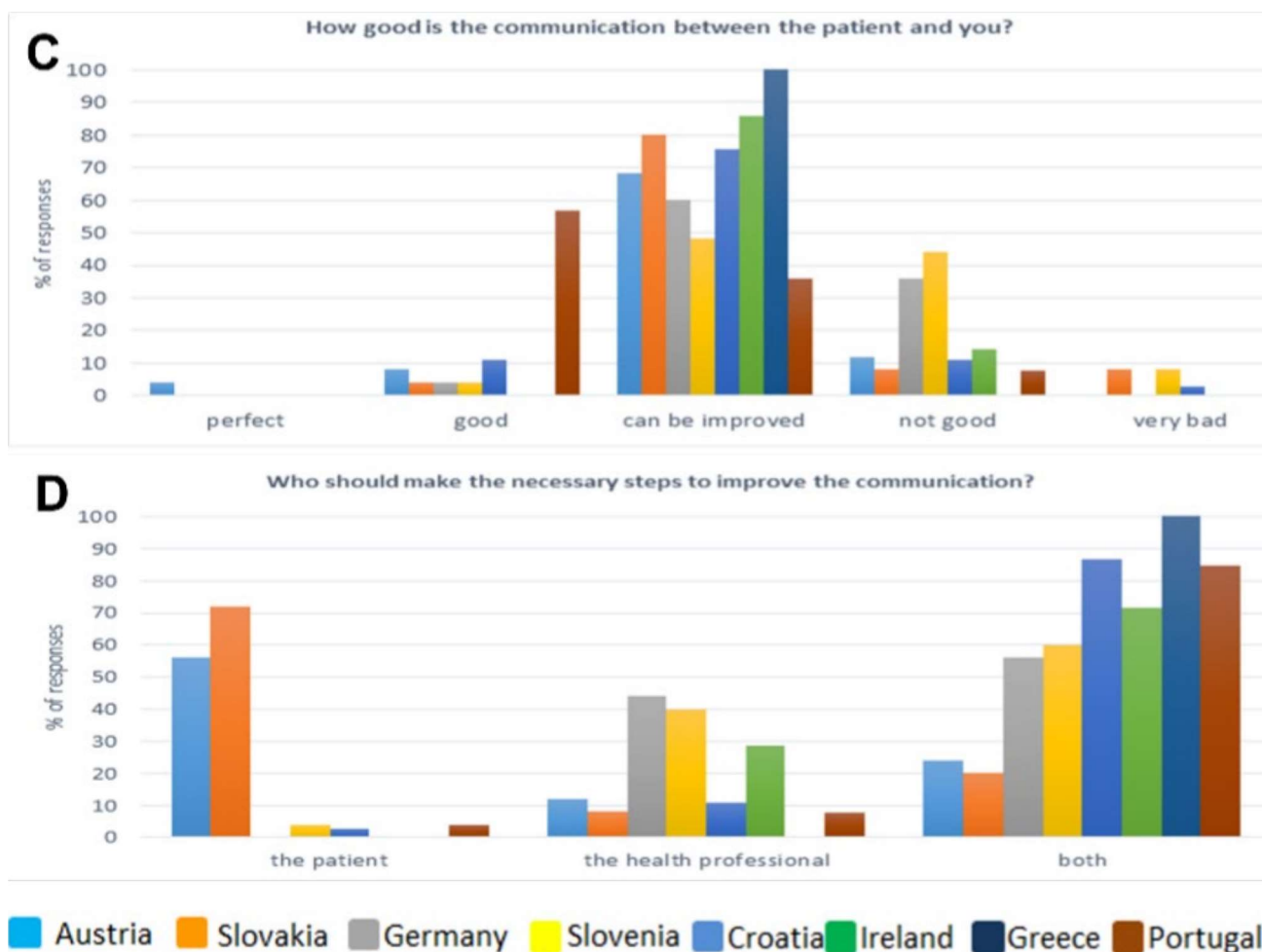


Figure 1. Illustration of some of the results extracted from the questionnaires administered to patients (A and B) and experts/ stakeholders (C and D).

After discussion among the partnership, the contents development was organized in three different modules, which one with different submodules, considering the skills/competences for the target population. **Table 1** shows the themes of the medical and informative contents produced.

Table 1. Contents developed in the project

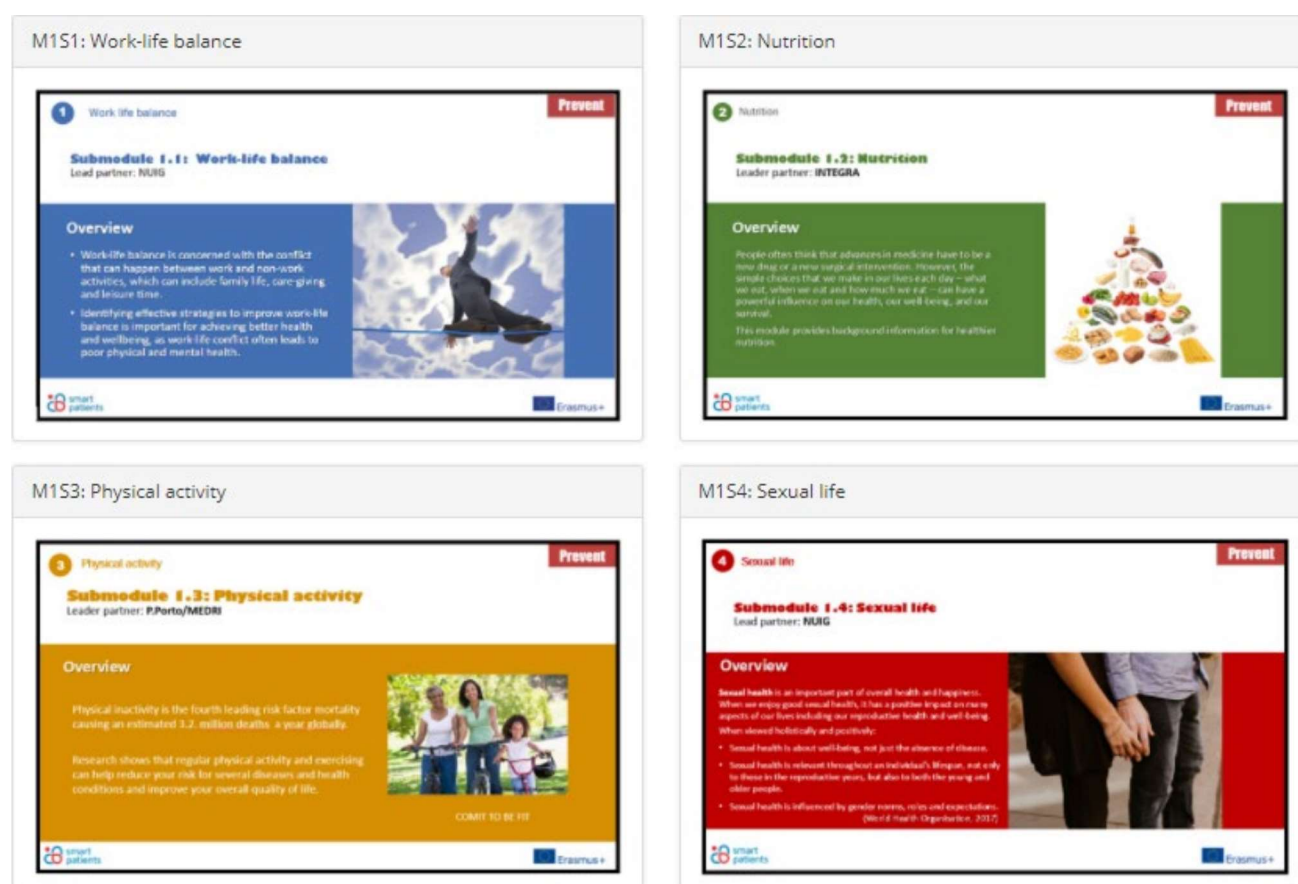
Module 1: Prevent	Module 2: Empower	Module 3: Participate
Submodule 1 Work life balance	Submodule 1 Understand your role	Submodule 1 Building relationship
Submodule 2 Nutrition	Submodule 2 Patient Skills	Submodule 2 Compliance
Submodule 3 Physical Activity	Submodule 3 Know your rights	Submodule 3 Reactions to illness
Submodule 4 Sexual life	Submodule 4 Cultural awareness	Submodule 4 Recovery - healing
Submodule 5 Mental health	Submodule 5 Patient Knowledge	Submodule 5 New perspective

Creation of the online platform and mobile application and its evaluation

Materials were developed as power point files support that were uploaded after the validation and translation, on an online platform that was created and installed on the project's website (<https://smart-patients.eu>). An example of the appearance of the online platform is showed on Figure 2. These developed materials can be consulted anywhere at any time through an App produced for android mobile devices.

Evaluation and dissemination of developed materials/contents

The main conclusion one can take from the study performed in the validation and dissemination phases is that the materials produced in the context of this project were generally well received and highly appreciated by the citizens and the experts/stakeholders. Platform contents are generally suitable for their purpose - citizens consider contents well designed and enough for them and consider the platform attractive and easy to use. The platform comprising the materials is appealing and very easy to use and the mobile application runs smoothly, and the contents can be accessed anytime and anywhere.



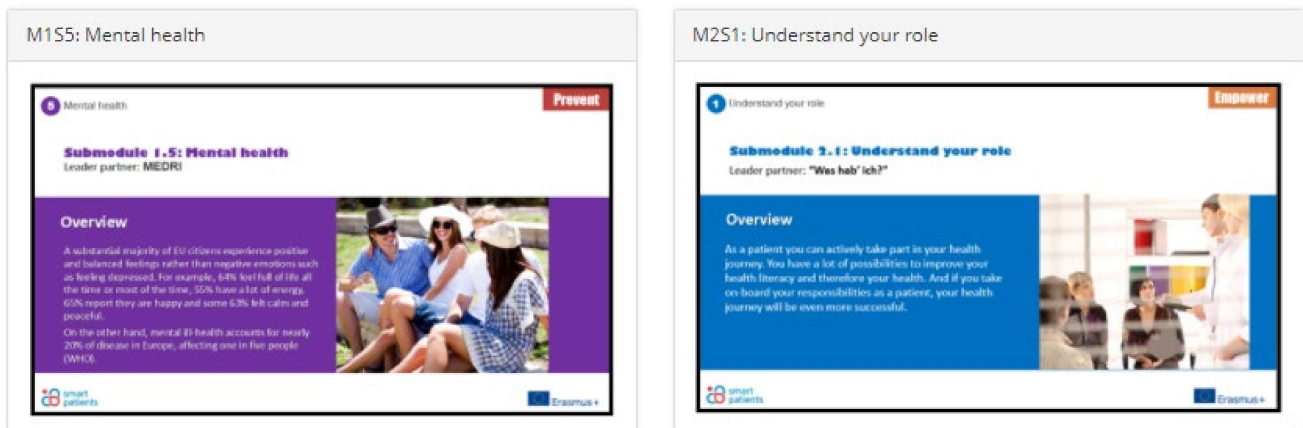


Figure 2. Illustration of contents displayed in the online platform in a colored and attractive way.

Taking into account the results of the pilot test surveys, as well as the conversations with some external evaluators and other health professionals, partners proposed to apply some other activities with the aim of dissemination, improvement and updating of the materials of the project, intending to reach a large number of people who wants to become a smart patient, including the presentation of online training platform to the student community (secondary schools and undergraduate finalists on health degrees - nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, audiology, pharmacy); presentation to users and stakeholders of social centres and health organizations; and presentation of the smart patients project and its products in scientific meetings.

Conclusion

The project was concluded on 31st October 2018 and all the objectives were successfully reached. In the upcoming years it is our intention to follow the experts and citizens who have been involved in the project in order to find out how the online training materials influenced the way of being/acting of the experts with their patients, and the citizens lifestyle as well as their empowerment in the management of health problems. Moreover, there have been some community interventions were the project and its material is presented to the stakeholders with the same purpose. Besides, it would be interesting to update and improve the training materials throughout time, in order citizens become increasingly empowered on health issues management and on their own health.

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