During the month of February 2013, in the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Department of „Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara was implemented the final step of a cross-border cooperation project with the 1st Department of Internal Medicine Department from the University of Szeged.

The project entitled „Deployment of a telemedicine system between university gastroenterology centers of Szeged and Timisoara for education and training of professionals” (Project ID: HURO/1001/140/2.3.1, acronym: HURO-TELEMED) started on the 1st of March 2013. It is a component of the Cross-border Cooperation Program 2007-2013 (www.huro-cbc.eu) sponsored by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund. The total budget of the project was 188,380 Euros, from which the European Union covered 160,123 Euros.

One of the main achievements of the project was the development of a videoconference system between the 1st Department of Medicine of the University of Szeged and the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology of “Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Timisoara. The primary objective was to ensure a real-time consultation on special procedures used in gastroenterology (such as gastrointestinal endoscopy, endoscopic ultrasound, contrast-enhanced transabdominal ultrasound and liver elastography), providing modern health care for the patients in Szeged and Timisoara. The second aim of the project was to support the ongoing undergraduate and postgraduate medical training in both academic centers. However, the system is not only for conversations between these two institutions but also allows live contacts and real-time consultations with other leading institutions.

The first video-conference occurred on the 6th of February 2013 and was preceded by a press conference. During the next 10 days 8 lectures as well as 12 case presentations were presented via the videoconference system, recorded for educational and training purposes. The topics from the Hungarian team regarded Endoscopic ultrasound, ERCP, diagnosis and treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease, while those of the Romanian team regarded Contrast Enhanced Ultrasound and hepatic elastography (Transient Elastography, ARFI Elastography, Supersonic Imaging Elastography and Strain Elastography). Both the lectures and the clinical case presentations (live as well as pre-prepared) were very interesting and highly appreciated by the audience. 15 experts in medical sciences, 6 assistants and a few experts in computer sciences were involved in the project to use the videoconference system and organize the related trainings.

The development of this videoconference system is a first step in the direction of telemedicine, allowing direct consultation when needed, as well as a second opinion in difficult cases, with no need to move the patient or the doctor. Also it is a first step in e-learning allowing live lectures and live case demonstrations without the need of students’ or teacher’s displacement.

We hope that this will be the start of new lines of collaboration in Romania and aboard and we invite whoever is interested in telemedicine and e-learning to contact us so that we can provide the technical details for further contacts!

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