

Insights

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THE DEBATE:
Should Pharma
Engage In eHealth

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Sharing information with the patient means humanising medicine. It's a wonderful thing to do for a GP. Usually we are seen as gatekeepers, but when we share information with our patients, we are in fact 'gate openers'.

Le Vallikivi, board member of the Estonian Family Doctors Association

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CHANGING THE MINDSET

Vasco Pereira is one of Portugal's leading personalities when it comes to bringing information technology to healthcare environments. In his current role as CEO at Hospital de Cascais he has overseen the management of a fully digitised hospital and even achieved level 6 of the HIMSS EMRAM scale in 2016. *Insights* finds out his institution is bearing the fruits of his hard work.

By Anna Engberg

To Pereira who spent the first seven years of his career as a lawyer, studying law was more of an emotional decision rather than a professional choice in terms of looking forward to possession of a career and being a lawyer: "I wanted to be able to help others and had a rather romantic view on how justice should be applied in the world." It was the law degree too, that opened doors into healthcare.

A LAWYER IN THE FIRST PLACE

The initial choice turned out to his advantage. Today Pereira does not only hold the position as Executive Board Member of Lusiadas ACE, a private healthcare group which is part of the United Healthcare Group. Since August 2015 he has been installed as Chairman and CEO of Hospital de Cascais, a large public-private hospital in the South-West of Portugal with more than 170,000 emergency episodes and 9,000 surgeries in 2016.

SWITCHING TO HEALTHCARE

Still, switching to healthcare happened by chance. In 2004 when Pereira was still working as a lawyer in Lisbon he was invited to build a legal team in the Hospital Amadora Sintra close to the Portuguese capital, at that point

in time the first and only public hospital with private management in Portugal and with 25,000 employees a very large one, too. "Healthcare back then was new to me. It was also my first contact with management," Pereira recalls. After accepting the proposal he spent more than three years as a General Counsel and Head of Legal Department at Hospital Amadora Sintra leading the legal department – a task that provided his introduction into management.

GETTING A Foothold IN MANAGEMENT

Equipped with this first experience in healthcare management, Pereira decided to enhance his management skills and went to do his MBA at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. in the US. Only two years later he ended up back in Portugal working for the same Holding Company in Lisbon and again worked his way up from the position as Corporate Purchasing Manager at the private healthcare group José de Mello Saúde, to the role of Head of Supply Chain and Corporate Procurement at Lusiadas Saúde Group by 2014.

In August 2015 he was nominated to be CEO and Chairman of the Hospital de Cascais and has been in the role since then. Pereira says: "From all the jobs I have had this is the one I definitely have enjoyed most so far. It has been thrilling leading the hospital through this evolution over the past years." He especially appreciates the team player aspect: "Leading nurses and doctors is vital to move an organisation forward. You also need to have a clear strategic view of how you would want to implement technology," Pereira outlines. "Being able to communicate strategy is very important," he continues. Pereira considers his academic and legal background a benefit, as it helps him to better understand the way the government works. On the other hand, his experiences in supply chain and logistics help him with adopting technology and place it in a more rewarding position.

THREE-TIMES AWARDED IN 2016

Pereira was bestowed with three prestigious awards last year, and is now considered an expert in introducing new technology smoothly to the hos-



Vasco Antunes Pereira holds the position as Executive Board Member of Lusiadas ACE, a private healthcare group which is part of the United Healthcare Group. Since August 2015 he has also been installed as Chairman and CEO of Hospital de Cascais, a large public-private hospital in the south-west of Portugal. In his current role as CEO at Hospital de Cascais he has overseen the management of a fully digitised hospital and even achieved level 6 of the HIMSS EMRAM scale in 2016.

pital environment. The first award, the GS1 Best Case Study Implementation Award, related to Pereira's engagement in adopting the GS1 barcode standard to trace drugs and their ingredients: "We were awarded for how smoothly we run the transition from regular to GS1 barcodes in the hospital," he says.

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With the Best Hospital Award from IASIST, part of QuintilesIMS (formerly IMS Health), Hospital de Cascais itself was awarded as the number one of all public medium-size hospitals in Portugal in 2016. Success criteria in this yearly benchmarking award include efficiency, clinical outcome and cost per patient, among others.

Finally, HIMSS' EMRAM nomination with Stage 6 recognised Pereira's

strategic pathway towards patient safety and patient-centred technology. Pereira observes that the success has been unintentional, as the main objective has been to "meet medication standards and run a major efficiency programme in 2016 leading to changes in several technologies in order to be more efficient." One of these positive outcomes was a change in nursing paradigm through the deployment of mobile device technology. The average time of drug administration per patient dropped from nine to two minutes leading not only to an 18% reduction in cost per patient, but also to "high care" meaning more time for direct and individual care on nursing side.

Vasco Pereira is looking forward to being audited by HIMSS for the Stage 7 Certification soon. "We expect to work totally paperless and just need to push decision support systems to our electronic medical records," he says.

Observing Portuguese healthcare, Pereira believes that we are on the verge of making a big difference: "Systems, physicians and nurses are no longer working back to back but hand in hand. We are pulling efforts on changing the mindset," he comments. His main objective is to change the way that professionals look at technology: "They should not only look at it as given but as something they can certainly work with to improve the outcome for the patient. This goal is not connected with any standards or achievements but with the right mindset in healthcare."

Considering how fast we have moved to adopting technology in our private day-to-day life and acknowledging that some of us may not even have fully digested that pace, Pereira looks at healthcare as an environment that has originally been very far away from the adoption of new technology in particular. He forecasts: "The challenge for Portuguese healthcare will be to move forward from something completely antiquated and outdated and opt to go ahead of the curve. To this end, mindsets also have to adapt. I am convinced that we will look back at this time in future and call it a decisive, disruptive moment." ■

Hospital de Cascais, a large public-private hospital in Portugal soon to be audited by HIMSS for EMRAM Stage 7