

## **Abstract**

In the healthcare system there is a clear a trend towards increased application of information and communication technologies. This thesis will assess that, as without the appropriate technological and innovative advances, the broad range of potential arising from the area of e-health and in particular telemedicine cannot be exploited.

A comparison will be made between Germany, Austria and Switzerland, looking at how far telemedical services are currently established in the different healthcare systems, as well as the challenges, room for potential and the judicial basis. In addition to technological innovations, the patients' behaviour is also changing. Up until some years ago, the all-accepting patient was the norm. However, nowadays, the decision making and more knowledgeable patients are becoming increasingly prominent. This creates a framework, which has proven to have a positive effect on the further development of the areas e-health and telemedicine

The current statistics indicate that the total of older people has risen significantly and correspondingly they are using more of the healthcare services.

In relation to this, critical voices talk about an imminent lack of doctors. Precisely here is where telemedicine comes in, with the aim of planning resources optimally and networking together. Potential such as cost-saving, increased quality of care and results, efficient telemonitoring of chronically ill patients, reduction of permanent catheters in hospitals, faster convalescence in a domestic setting and finally higher customer satisfaction can be deduced from an empirical and literature based examination. Now behind every one of these potential advantages there are a variety of challenges are hidden, which must be overcome. The two biggest difficulties which telemedicine pilot projects have faced, are the lack of a judicial basis in relation to liability and the lack of service compensation. Here a differentiation must be made between the D-A-CH countries. In Switzerland there are already regulations regarding compensation for services, however, this is not comprehensive in the states examined. This fact turns out to be a critical point, as without the appropriate financing, telemedicine cannot be integrated into routine care.

Finally it must be stated that telemedicine brings with it many possibilities that can make a positive change in the healthcare system. At the moment the available potential is nowhere near to being fully used, although it does seem that the tendency is going in the right direction.