

Spring IT congresses and the economic outlook

By Guido Gebhardt

April, the month of showers and flowers, and most importantly for those working in healthcare IT, two European congresses: **ConhIT** and **Med-e-Tel**. Despite the significance of modern e-health infrastructures for hospitals, e-health congresses are not generally strong magnets for visitors. Whilst Med-e-Tel had 500 visitors in 2008, ConhIT managed only around 2,000 participants – despite the very important information on offer. Both events offer similar attractions – education, networking and business-relationship management, with opportunities to speak with IT providers.

Whereas ConhIT is aimed at the German-speaking market, Med-e-Tel addresses an international audience. This year's spring programme will be complemented across the Atlantic by the Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS).

ConhIT 2009 - Berlin, 21-23 April



Dr Carl Dujat

What if hospital doctors could retrieve outpatient ultrasound images at a click of a mouse, and general practitioners had access to hospital X-rays instead of having to request them by phone? These are key questions for ConhIT 2009. Nowadays, when dealing with patient data medical institutions are still, to a large extent, closed units. X-rays, laboratory data, surgery reports, whatever the documentation produced in a hospital, it usually stays in the departments. Vice versa, when GPs carry out examinations, hospitals only receive paper copy print-outs and not much else. This is undergoing radical change.

ConhIT is considered *the* meeting place for Healthcare IT in Germany. Organised by VHitG. e.V. and Messe Berlin, the event will again showcase almost all the big players in Healthcare IT, including the leading providers of cross-institutional electronic patient records.

Med-e-Tel 2009 - Luxembourg, 1-3 April

Med-e-Tel has a proven potential for education, networking and business

among a global audience with diverse professional backgrounds. E-health, telemedicine and health ICT are the tools for healthcare institutions, medical workers, and patients, as well as governments, and this event draws together the many stakeholders.

The conference programme includes over 150 presentations and workshops, with international experts explaining current applications and giving best practice examples.

Med-e-Tel is supported by a range of international associations and institutions involved in the research, development or funding of e-health and telemedicine initiatives.

Medical specialists also can benefit from up to 18 hours of CME credits.

HIMSS09 - Chicago, 4-8 April

This annual conference & exhibition is the IT industry's biggest event. Over 300 education sessions will provide usable knowledge on healthcare IT and management systems. Sessions include Clinical Decision Support; Leadership and Strategic Planning; the Electronic Patient Record (EPR); Quality, Patient Safety and Risk Management; Interoperability, Standards and Health Information Exchange and Process Improvement.

Nearly 900 IT companies (200 at HIMSS09 for the first time) will present products and services, including EPRs, health information management systems, integration tools/interoperability, clinical documentation and consulting.

VHitG Press Meeting, Berlin

'The framework for the IT sector in the German healthcare market will not change fundamentally. The economic crisis will have only little impact on this industry because of the economic recovery plan; the market is likely to



From left: VHitG Board members Bernhard Calmer, Siemens Medical Solutions; Dr Bernhard Thibaut, SAP Germany; Jens Naumann, medatiXX GmbH and Matthias Meierhofer, Meierhofer AG

remain as exciting as in previous years,' according to Dr Bernhard Thibaut, of SAP Germany AG & Co. and a member of the board of the German Association of Health Service IT Solutions Manufacturers (VHitG).

However, even if the economic crisis is not creating any additional problems, there are still well-known, existing and continuing problems that pose a challenge for this industry sector: restricted budgets and limited capacities for ambitious IT projects in hospitals, as well as the current legal framework, result in sluggish implementation.

Fellow VHitG board member Bernhard Calmer of Siemens Medical Solutions said the focus is mainly on three trends:

- **Interoperability:** Modern IT solutions must offer medical staff the chance to work together across departments and in a 'disease focused' manner.

- **Process optimisation:** IT solutions must adapt to the trend of increasing labour division because of decreasing budgets. The opportunity to exchange data across hospitals and surgeries is increasingly important. Telemedicine, telediagnosics and teleconsulting are coming to the fore.

- **Data administration:** The volume of patient data is going to explode in the near future, and their administration will become a major challenge. The very different types of patient information, from diagnostic images through to doctors' letters, must be logically linked and brought together.

Matthias Meierhofer, of Meierhofer AG, sees a general need to catch up regarding the prevalence of IT solutions in healthcare and he is addressing the industry with this problem. The main obstacle for the uptake of IT solutions, particularly in fields such as nursing, is the lack of usability of the products, he said.

Finally, **Jens Naumann**, medatiXX GmbH, spoke of the increasing trend towards internationalisation. 'At the moment the IT sector is a relatively small, local market, because requirements in individual European countries are very specific, but this will change as hospitals become more international.'

TELE

Transforming theatre and surgery

Germany - The Barmherzigen Brüder Hospital in Regensburg, serves populations of Lower and the Upper Palatinate. Years ago, this hospital only three operating theatres; today there are six



The Barmherzigen Brüder Hospital

Due to the constant increase in complexity of demands on the medical staff as well as the technical equipment in the operating theatre (OT), Barmherzigen Brüder Hospital decided to customise its theatres for the respective areas. The focus on the operating theatre supports the problem-free work for physicians and medical personnel. 'With a view to the stable conditions in the operating theatre through specialisation. On the one hand, this benefits the physicians who then operate a small number of devices and know exactly how to deploy these in an optimal manner. On the other, it allows a technical malfunction to be quickly found and the source of the

