

# Strategies that help interaction between Primary Health Care and Public Hospitals: a reflection of the Portuguese Health system

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## Extended abstract

This work intends to evaluate the strategies that facilitate an interaction between Primary Health Care (PHC) and Public Hospitals (PH) in Portugal to maximize health benefits while rationalizing resources, taking into account that health units aim to achieve service efficiency and user satisfaction while reducing costs.

The development of Communication and Information Technologies (CIT) for health sector is one of the fundamental strategies for the articulation of PHC and PH, providing excellent resources to improve the national health system (NHS)<sup>1</sup>. They can be decisive in obtaining direct health gains for the individual, family and community and, indirectly, gains for the economy of a country (economic and social development). Currently, there is an electronic form ISHU2 in PHC and the IHI3 in PH, which enables the interaction of administrative information and the ALERT<sup>®</sup> (which makes the clinical referral of users of PHC for PH). CIT in the Portuguese health system could create a Personal Health Records, with the possibility of going by adding relevant information about their health (Electronic Health Records), to centralize all clinical information (e.g.: medical history, medications, test results, allergies) available on a network (important for an adequate diagnosis and treatment), avoiding the repetition of such tests and unnecessary duplication of information, with guaranteed secure access. Moreover, the data entered by users may be used (while respecting the ethical principles of confidentiality and total security) for epidemiological research (e.g., knowing the incidence of a type of pathology(s) in a given region), and also for the management of health institutions (e.g., measuring the productivity of a Hospital and to produce quality indicators), integrated in the Portuguese NHS. Finally, institutions should increasingly work in networks, be more flexible and adaptable to changes, with the management being responsible for triggering the organizational changes that can bring this about.

In short, the articulation of PHC and PH could be improved by efficient information networks. Nevertheless, an efficient health care system also depends on well-structured systems that provide products and services when and where needed, control costs and performance and identify areas for improvement. So, further research on this is needed to better evaluate this strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> In Portugal has the designation SNS (Serviço Nacional de Saúde).

<sup>2</sup> In Portugal has the designation SINUS (Sistema de Informação nas Unidades de Saúde).

<sup>3</sup> In Portugal has the designation SONHO (Sistema Integrado de Informação Hospitalar).