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Heinsberg hospital implements
online appointment booking

"With online appointment booking, we have significantly relieved our staff of administrative tasks. This frees up more time for treating patients."

Dr. Thomas Baltus, Chief Physician, Anesthesiology, Heinsberg Municipal Hospital

Städtisches Krankenhaus Heinsberg (Heinsberg Municipal Hospital) has a long tradition. Founded in 1861 and expanded continually ever since, this academic teaching hospital of RWTH Aachen University now has 187 beds and around 450 staff. It is the central hospital for the district seat's more than 40,000 residents, as well as the nearly quarter-million residents of the greater district. It operates departments for surgery, internal medicine, gynecology and obstetrics, palliative care, ENT medicine, and anesthesiology, supplemented by a diabetes center and the Heinsberg Breast Center.

Efficient hospital workflows are essential for the decision-makers in Heinsberg, which is why the hospital has been pursuing the systematic digitalization of its processes for many years now. The IT supports doctors and care staff during the medical documentation process, for example, freeing up time that can be invested in patient care. The hospital already implemented iMedOne® as its hospital information system (HIS) several years ago. The iMedOne® Mobile app has now established itself as an indispensable resource. It is used for wound documentation, for example, but also supports activity recording for the settlement with health insurance providers. "We're working better and faster," say users.

The hospital is now taking the next step in its digitalization – one that goes beyond the hospital doors: patients have the possibility of booking appointments with medical specialists online. The anesthesiology team is the first to get started. T-Systems and its partner m.Doc implemented the innovative process, which will put an end to waiting on hold on the phone, among other benefits. Patients can book appointments with a click.

At a glance

- Reduction of administrative workload for booking appointments
- Implementation of the m.Doc patient portal with app and website
- Easy to use (Software as a Service)
- Integration with the hospital information system
- More freedoms for staff and patients
- The patient portal can easily be enhanced with additional services

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Reference in detail

The challenge

A 10-person team of doctors takes care of all anesthesia-related activities in Heinsberg. In addition to classic anesthesiology, this also involves intensive care, emergency medicine, and pain management. Palliative medicine was added in 2013. Before every operation or medical intervention, a briefing between the patient and an anesthesiologist is mandatory. This premedication talk helps the doctor decide which form of anesthesia is best suited to the patient and gives the patient the opportunity to ask questions. Around 4,000 briefings like this take place in Heinsberg every year, which means every doctor in the department has to conduct and document some 400 briefings on average. These talks are difficult to plan in the long term in acute care, but can be scheduled in advance for planned surgeries. This gives the doctors planning security, which in turn frees up time for acute, short-term activities. The hospital in Heinsberg was looking for a smart solution to enable people outside the clinic to make appointments, too. It had to be easy to use and integrated in the hospital processes, i.e., directly pass on the appointments to the iMedOne® HIS. The solution had to create maximum transparency for doctors and patients and increase the efficiency of process flows.

The solution

T-Systems and the hospital found the right solution with the "Appointment Booking" module – one of 30 modules now available on the m.Doc Smart Health Platform. The hospital uses the web application as SaaS (Software as a Service). The entire service is provided from the Telekom Healthcare Cloud in Germany. T-Systems runs the application in a private cloud. This meets the high demands for privacy and data security, even in the healthcare sector. Both doctors and patients can use the service easily through a web browser. Alternatively, patients can also download the corresponding app from an app store. The appointment bookings are integrated with the HIS through a synchronous, bidirectional standard interface. As a result, appointment requests can be matched directly with availability. The requests are then added to the doctor's calendar, who can confirm or deny them, depending on the situation. In the latter case, the system suggests alternative appointment dates.

Customer benefit

The high user-friendliness won both sides over to the solution – the appointment booking gets patients closer to the hospital. Failed calls are a thing of the past. Instead, patients can make appointments conveniently via app or web browser – and cancel them if something comes up. The doctors have full transparency over the appointment situation at all times. The solution is a real relief for the hospital workflows. Manual intervention by assistants or administrative staff is no longer needed. And this means more time for patients, too. With the appointment booking function, Heinsberg hospital is taking another step toward digitalization and positioning itself as a digital pioneer. The Hospital Future Act (Krankenhauszukunftsgesetz) is encouraging hospitals to do so – and subsidizes the corresponding projects. However, m.Doc isn't just about booking appointments. The patient portal offers a variety of add-on modules that can support patients during hospital stays, as well: site plans, hospital appointments, and information turn this tool into a hospital companion app. With appointment bookings, the hospital has set the course for optimizing hospital stays for its patients in future.

Further advantages:

- Hospital innovation
- Compliance with all regulatory requirements
- Easy to deploy end-to-end solution
- Enhanced user experience
- Needs-based billing model