

First eMEN seminar in the Netherlands was a great success!

On July 11th the first eMEN seminar was organised at the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam. Almost 70 participants from Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, the UK, Portugal and Ireland joint this interesting event.

This was the first e-mental health seminar in the Netherlands which presented the different, multidisciplinary aspects of e-mental health implementation.

The event was opened by Jan Schaart (Board of Directors) and Oyono Vlijter (eMEN project leader) from Arq Foundation. They presented Arq and the objectives and activities of the eMEN project. The opening was followed by several key note speakers addressing the theme of the seminar: Privacy, Technology and Quality. Jaco van Duivenboden and Ad Koppejan presented the topic of privacy, in a national and European context. This complicated topic is usually not specifically discussed at seminars and other events. Jaco presented national regulations and European data privacy directive (which will come into force from May 2018).

Ad showed how Emergis (treatment center) is dealing with these law and regulations in practice (information and privacy policy), and that many treatment centres are not in compliance or properly protected against cyber threats. This must be prioritised by Board of Directors and Management. Both experts emphasized privacy as a crucial aspect for the future success of e-mental health.

The speakers addressing the topic of technical issues did this by using case studies. Dr. Victoria Betton, director of mHabitat (Leeds, UK), talked about digital innovation pathways and the importance of social purpose, human centred design and multichannel communication. The level of success is directly connected with the involvement of end-users. Dietmar Griep talked about how his own organisation (Antes) is implementing e-mental health, and with which technical challenges they are dealing with. He also talked about the importance of a good roadmap, critical success factors (caregiver, patient/family and standard interfaces) and sharing information.

The two final speakers talked about quality, Dr. Marilyn Lennon from the University of Strathclyde and Evert Hoogendoorn from the Dutch (serious) gaming company IJsfontein. Marilyn presented a more timely and costs efficient way of evaluating e-mental health products . She emphasized that the current model of costly and long duration Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) is not necessary for all e-mental health applications. At the moment there is an imbalance between validity of evidence and innovation, transformation, scale and routinisation.

Evert gave a dynamic and interactive presentation about how his company develops a product from scratch. He did this by showing the different structured steps IJsfontein is talking when developing a product. He emphasized the importance of talking iterative steps in the process and used, as an example, a serious game they are currently developing for teenagers depression.

The session was closed with a panel discussion in which different statements and questions were discussed with the speakers. They all agreed that, in the coming years, e-mental health will become a standard tool for mental health treatment. Another conclusion was that privacy should be integrated in the design of the application.

The seminar gave us further insides into the different multidisciplinary aspects for e-mental health implementation. Oyono Vlijter emphasized the importance of closer cooperation between the stakeholders and keeping an open mind when it comes to find more efficient ways to speed up implementation. We can only move forward if we understand the different implementation challenges. At the end, this project is all about the growing number of people dealing with mental health challenges on a daily basis.

The next eMEN seminar in the Netherlands in the Spring of next year and will focus on e-mental health training and curriculum development.

If you want to join our project please send an email to Oyono Vlijter, o.vlijter@arg.org

eMEN: unlocking the power of technology to improve Europe's mental health - a new strategy for more and better e-mental health