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1 Latest news and trends

1.1 Latest news

Vietnam PM appoints new deputy health minister, as minister seat remains vacant

Do Xuan Tuyen (R) is pictured during an event in the northern province of Hung Yen, Vietnam. Photo: hungyentv.vn

The third deputy health minister has been selected by the Vietnamese government, while the seat of the ministry’s head remains unoccupied following the retirement of former Minister of Health Nguyen Thi Kim Tien last month.

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc has signed a decision to appoint Do Xuan Tuyen as Deputy Minister of Health.

Tuyen, 53, was deputy secretary of the Party Committee and chairman of the People’s Council in the northern province of Hung Yen before assuming the new post.

He graduated from Military Medical University and was previously director of the medicine center of Hung Yen, the capital city of the namesake province.

Prior to Tuyen’s appointment, the Ministry of Health had two deputy ministers, Truong Quoc Cuong and Nguyen Truong Son.

Multiple departments under the health ministry still lack a leader.

On November 22, members of the lawmaking National Assembly cast their ballots to relieve Nguyen Thi Kim Tien of her position as health minister, as she had reached retirement age.

Tien has assumed the duty as head of a committee in charge of medical care for central officials under the Party Central Committee.
As the NA did not carry out a procedure to appoint anyone to replace Tien, the prime minister is now authorized to assign an acting health minister in accordance with the law.

Earlier, Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam was made secretary of the Party Committee of the Ministry of Health -- the effective leader of the agency.


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Fostering medical tourism on the agenda of health ministry conference

Gia An 115 Hospital is a popular medical destination for foreigners. Photo courtesy of sggp.org.vn

According to the Ministry of Health, a total of 89,000 foreigners came to the country for medical reasons and 10,100 underwent treatment in the period. Most of the patients, from Cambodia, Laos, China, the U.S, the Philippines, and Australia, consider the quality of healthcare in Việt Nam good. They come mostly for cardiovascular, dental, oncological, and cosmetic surgery.

HCM CITY – S. Sokunthea, a 38-year-old Cambodian, was brought to Việt Nam for treatment at the City International Hospital in HCM City.

She was in a critical condition at the time of admission. She had undergone emergency caesarean section and hysterectomy to stop bleeding in Cambodia, but a prolonged haemorrhage resulted in multi-organ failure and secondary coagulopathy.

After two weeks of treatment at the City International Hospital, she gradually recovered. Y.Vannara, 54, came to Việt Nam from Laos with colon cancer and has made a total of five visits for health checks.

“In Laos, many people with similar illnesses choose to come to Việt Nam for treatment and their outcomes are positive. The doctors and nurses here are friendly and enthusiastic, and instructed me step by step on how to take care of myself.”
Chợ Rẫy Hospital, HCM City University Medical Centre, Gia An 115 Hospital, and Oncology Hospital are some of the popular destinations for foreign medical tourists.

In the first six months of this year the HCM City University Medical Centre examined 8,282 foreigners and overseas Vietnamese and provided inpatient treatment to 927. For Chợ Rẫy Hospital the numbers were 1,793 and 292. **According to the Ministry of Health, a total of 89,000 foreigners came to the country for medical reasons and 10,100 underwent treatment in the period.**

Most of the patients, from Cambodia, Laos, China, the U.S, the Philippines, and Australia, consider the quality of healthcare in Việt Nam good. They come mostly for cardiovascular, dental, oncological, and cosmetic surgery. The ministry held a conference on December 14 to discuss how to attract foreigners, Vietnamese living overseas and affluent locals to Vietnamese hospitals in case of ailments.

Experts expressed concern about the fact that 40,000 Vietnamese choose to go abroad every year for medical treatment. Though the quality of the country’s medical services is better than in other countries in the region, they said the inefficient mechanism to collect international insurance payments discourages people from returning for further checks after having surgeries done here.

“Our infrastructure is still poor and public hospitals tend to lack well-rounded healthcare services such as 24/24 care givers, translators and quality rooms,” one expert said. According to Assoc Prof Lương Ngọc Khuê, director of the Medical Services Administration, Việt Nam has highly competent doctors who can handle severe cases.

“In order to maintain foreign patients’ interest, it is important for all hospitals to invest in better infrastructure and skilled human resources. Besides, locals should be aware that Vietnamese hospitals can handle difficult cases like foreign hospitals.”  — VNS


**Deputy PM asks for better care for elderly**

Deputy Prime Minister Vũ Đức Đam speaks at a working session of the National Committee on Vietnamese Old Persons to review 2019’s work yesterday. — Photo thanhtra.com.vn
HÀ NỘI — Deputy Prime Minister Vũ Đức Đam has instructed authorities and society to take responsibility for providing good care to the elderly.

Đam, also chairman of the National Committee on Vietnamese Old Persons, made the statement at a working session of the committee yesterday to review 2019’s work.

He pointed to the need to promote the role of the elderly in consulting and supervising activities to do with Party and State policies.

The year 2020 would see efforts to mobilise the whole society to implement the insurance policy, particularly social insurance with the old being one of the targets, he said, urging Vietnam Social Security to improve the efficiency of the policy to take care of the elderly and ensure social security.

Deputy Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Lê Tấn Dũng said the Party and State issued many policies to provide care for the elderly over the last year.

The Government in 2019 earmarked over VND17.5 trillion (US$757 million) to implement social support policies, including providing monthly social allowance and buying health insurance cards for more than 1.7 million old people.

Localities have taken the initiative to support the elderly, including by building houses, providing capital for production expansion and providing health check-ups and treatment.

Nursing, singing, dancing and other activities, where old people can work and participate, and gymnasiums and clubs where many generations help each other have been developed in many localities.

However, difficulties remain, Deputy PM Đam said. The living standards of the elderly remain low, many still have to work for a living and many live in makeshift houses.

Health check-ups and treatment activities for the elderly remained limited due to a lack of finance, he said.

He asked ministries and agencies to find solutions to tackle these difficulties.

Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs Đào Ngọc Dung said the number of homeless elderly people kept increasing and suggested finding policies to encourage the private sector to invest in building health care facilities for the elderly.

As of 2019, Việt Nam was home to 11.4 million old people, accounting for 12 per cent of the population. More than 1.9 million people are over 80 years old. — VNS

Source: https://vietnamnews.vn/society/570129/deputy-pm-askes-for-better-care-for-elderly.html
ASEAN aiming to develop Universal Healthcare Coverage for all member states

Promoting universal healthcare coverage for citizens is now a common goal of ASEAN member states. The aim is to grant people access to healthcare without barriers to improve nations’ health and wellbeing of all citizens. Universal healthcare is a hallmark of civilised governments around the world with the UN describing UHC as a right of all citizens.

Deputy Permanent Secretary of Public Health Ministry Dr Supakit Sirilak says the ASEAN Bloc hopes to assist some member states lift the standard of their medical services to provide full universal healthcare, understanding that each nation is at a different stage of economic development. Supakit oversees ministerial collaboration on the health agenda for the ASEAN states.

“Governments of some countries have yet to provide health coverage to civil servants. It would be difficult for them to implement UHC in the near future.”

ASEAN countries fall into three groups progressing on their healthcare development journey.

- Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have succeeded in setting up successful UHC (Universal Health Care).

  “The entire populations of these countries are covered by healthcare insurance.”

  • Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam are halfway through the journey to UHC.

  “Their governments have passed laws to guarantee healthcare access to citizens but their health insurance programs do not cover every citizen at this stage.”

  • Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar lack financial resources to fund free healthcare for citizens at this stage.

  “Each ASEAN nation has a different level of health expenditure, showing the gap in health access among citizens in the region.”

Source: https://thethaiger.com/hot-news/economy/asean-aiming-to-develop-universal-healthcare-coverage-for-all-member-states
The abuse of health services and the health insurance fund is still a challenge for Vietnam.

Despite the number of people covered by health insurance rising in Vietnam, the abuse of health services and the health insurance fund is still a challenge for the country.

In Hanoi (VNS/VNA) - Despite the number of people covered by health insurance rising in Vietnam, the abuse of health services and the health insurance fund is still a challenge for the country.

Le Van Kham, director of the Department of Health Insurance under the Ministry of Health (MoH), made the statement at a conference on December 12 in Hanoi to review five years of the Social Health Insurance Law and make recommendations for the revised law.

More than 83.5 million people across Vietnam were covered by health insurance by the end of last year, representing 88.5 percent of the population, Kham said.

The number of health insurance holders has exceeded the goal set by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc of reaching 80 percent of the population joining social insurance by the end of 2020.

However, he pointed out several common health service abuses, including the prescription of unnecessary high-tech tests and health centres asking patients to pay for medicine covered by health insurance.

Some facilities provide medical technical services to patients not in accordance with professional procedures issued by the Ministry of Health or practitioners did not have necessary certificates.

Some patients were hospitalised when it was not necessary or had their treatment at the hospital prolonged, he said.
Addressing the conference, Nguyen Truong Son, Deputy Minister of Health, said health insurance was an important social policy of the Party and the State, a financial mechanism in the healthcare sector for the sake of equity, efficiency and protection of people’s health.

The quality of health check-ups and treatment with health insurance had improved, he said. People have access to modern technical service and new and effective types of drugs which helped them overcome sickness and fatal disease.

The health insurance fund has become a basic financial source for the operation of hospitals and health facilities, Son said, adding that the health insurance policy had ensured risk sharing among health insurance participants.

He said that there were still shortcomings with the Social Health Insurance. He cited unspecific guidance documents and inconsistencies between the law and other legal documents related to health insurance. The low competence of health facilities and their staff was also a problem.

Therefore, he said, it was essential to revise the law.

One of contents of the draft Health Insurance Law amended by the MoH was the establishment of an independent health insurance assessment agency, separate from the current Vietnam Social Security.

The ministry also suggested setting up a National Advisory Council whose operation would be decided by the Government.

According to Kham, the organisation of an independent agency will help ensure the transparency and objectiveness of the assessment while the National Advisory Council will ensure the Social Health Insurance Law is carried out in a consistent manner./.


### 1.2 Trends

**Quality of life improving in Vietnam**

Hanoi (VNS/VNA) - Vietnam’s population quality has significantly improved during the past 10 years with improved education level and healthcare, especially maternal and child health, experts agreed at a conference held in Hanoi on December 26.

The conference, organised by the General Office for Population and Family Planning (GOPFP), aimed to supply information to the press about the country’s population and development, and its strategy going forward.

Speaking at the conference, Nguyen Van Tan, former deputy director of the GOPFP, said the under-one mortality rate this year is 14 per 1,000 live births, down by two compared to 2009.

The maternal mortality rate in 2019 was 46 cases per 100,000 live births, down 23 cases compared to 2009.

These results suggested Vietnam was on track to achieve its goal of reducing its maternal mortality rate ahead of the target in the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 agenda, which is 45 cases per 100,000 live births by 2030, he said.
Life expectancy has increased since 1989, rising from 65.2 years old then to 72.8 in 2009 and 73.6 years old in 2019.

Associate professor Nguyen Thanh Loi, member of the Vietnam Journalists Association’s executive board and editor-in-chief of Nguoi lam bao (Journalists) magazine, said the country aimed to promote rational population distribution and take advantage of the golden demographics, understood as the proportion of labourers being double the dependent population, while adapting to population aging.

The work is part of targets in the Vietnam Population Strategy, which was approved last month by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

Under the strategy, Vietnam expects to have an average life expectancy of 75 years, with a minimum healthy life of 68 years, up from the current figure of 64.

Under the strategy, the average male height is expected to reach 1.68m and the female height is anticipated to reach 1.57m by 2030, an increase by four centimetres compared with present.

However, Tan said many things still needed to be done to achieve this.

Unequal sex ratio at birth remained high with 111.5 boys per 100 girls. If the problem continues, at least 2.3 million men in Vietnam will not be able to find wives by 2050.

The rate of giving birth among those aged 10-17 is also an issue, with 3.3 percent of all women giving birth being adolescents. The highest rate was in northern midlands and mountainous areas with 9.7 percent.

The country currently has 8.3 percent of its general school-age children out of school.

Do Thi Hong, deputy director of the Communications and Education Department under the GOPFP, said more education about gender equality was important.

More measures should be set up to take advantage of the golden demographics and adapt to the aging population.

In the long term, she said, women’s position should be enhanced in every field including politics, socio-economy and culture to improve gender equality.

She added that Vietnam has been enjoying the golden demographics, so the country should invest in education, healthcare and other fields to improve people’s health, education and skills.

This would help drive the country’s development, she said.

According to the results of the 2019 National Population and Housing Census, Vietnam’s population was more than 96.2 million as of April this year, raking third in Southeast Asia and 15th in the world./.


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**Rising medical tourism**

Vietnam is emerging as a key player in Southeast Asia’s medical tourism industry. In 2017, 80,000 foreign tourists came to Vietnam for health check-ups and medical treatment, bringing in US$2 billion in total. The medical tourism industry is projected to grow 18 to 20 percent annually.

The main reasons for Vietnam’s attractiveness to foreign patients include its central location in Southeast Asia, political stability, affordability, and relatively good medical care.
Key locations for medical tourism are Phu Quoc, Vung Tau, Nha Trang and Da Nang. Resorts in these regions have tried to integrate facilities to make them more suitable for medical tourism.


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**Vietnam to become super-aging country by 2050**

Senior citizens in Vietnam (Photo: VNA)

**Hanoi (VNA) –** Vietnam will become a “super-aging” country by 2050, however, the country is not prepared to adapt to the rapid pace of aging and provide good care for the growing elderly population, heard a workshop in Hanoi on December 12.

“The Workshop on Aging Population and Health: The Longitudinal Study and the Role of Population Collaborators in Community Based Care for Older People” was held by the General Department for Population and Family Planning (GOPFP) under the Ministry of Health in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) of Japan and the Institute of Population, Health and Development (PHAD).

Population aging is one of the most significant social transformations globally with one in 11 people in the world over age 65 this year, said GOPFP Deputy General Director Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lan in her opening remarks.

Vietnam officially entered an “aging phase” in 2011 with 7 percent of the population above age 65, she said. This year, the figure grew to 8.3 percent, equivalent to over 8 million people.

Such rapid pace of aging has placed great burden on Vietnam’s health care for the elderly but the country has yet to prepare for that, she said.
In 2018, the ERIA teamed up with the PHAD to conduct a longitudinal study on the older people and health of the elderly on about 6,050 older people in 10 cities and provinces in Vietnam from December 1, 2018 to May 31, 2019.

The findings show that over 57 percent of old people asked were women, over 82 percent of them got married, and about 70 percent lived in rural areas. The percentage of the older people who live alone is relatively low, around 11 percent for women and 4 percent for men.

It also reveals the elderly’s health status. Accordingly, more than 62 percent of the respondents said they were suffering from high blood pressure, 86 percent of whom were receiving treatment. About 40 percent did not know they have high blood pressure.

About 56 percent were satisfied with sleep, over 6 percent showed signs of depression and 4.4 percent showed signs of dementia. About 91 percent owned a health insurance card.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Quynh, a programme official from the UNFPA, said that the population aging in Vietnam is partly due to falling birth rates in all six socio-economic regions and ethnic minority groups.

Vietnam needs to have a health care strategy and ensure good health for the elderly during their life circle, he said, stressing the importance of initial health care, preventive care, medical and non-medical care, health care services at home and in the community./.

Struggling to eliminate gender inequality, Vietnam falls 10 places to 87th in 2019 global ranking.

With an average score of 0.700 on a scale of 1, Vietnam is making little progress toward gender equality, according to 2019 Global Gender Gap Report released by World Economic Forum.

Across Southeast Asia, the Philippines performed best, ranking 16th globally, followed by Laos (43rd), Singapore (54th), Thailand (75th), and Indonesia (85th). Vietnam lies ahead of Cambodia (89th), Brunei (95th), Malaysia (104th) and Myanmar (114th).

The report measured 153 countries and territories globally on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and life expectancy, as well as political empowerment.

Of the four, Vietnam did best in economic participation and opportunity, ranking 31st globally. Almost 80 percent of local women participate in the workforce, compared to 86.4 percent of men.

The proportion of Vietnamese women occupying professional and technical positions was 54.6 percent while men account for only 45.4 percent.

In terms of education, the country ranked 93rd globally, having made substantial improvements in ensuring access for women, among whom the literacy rate reached 93.6 percent compared to 96.5 percent of men.

However, political empowerment for women is still limited, standing 110th globally. Vietnamese women have a 26.7 percent share in parliament seats while only 4 percent hold ministerial positions.

This year, Vietnam performed worst in health and life expectancy, ranking 151st globally, with local women unable to gain the same access to health as men.
Iceland topped the list as the closest to eliminating its gender gap, followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden and Nicaragua. Yemen ranked worst for gender equality, followed by poor, conflict-torn Iraq and Pakistan.

The report stated that as a whole, the world had experienced some improvement in gender equality, thanks to a significant rise in female parliamentarians, ministers and even heads of state.

This improvement, however, has mostly occurred in Western Europe and South America, where gender parity, at the current rate, could be achieved in 54 and 59 years, respectively. Asia-Pacific, on the other hand, is estimated to take 163 years to reach the same level.


Liver cancer kills about 25,000 people yearly in Vietnam

According to the Vietnam Society of Hepato Biliary Pancreatic Surgery, liver cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Vietnam presently killing up to 25,000 patients yearly, tripling traffic accident-related victims.

Additionally, hepatitis, cirrhosis, disorders of the pancreas are challenges of the country’s health sector.

Chairman of the Vietnam Society of Hepato Biliary Pancreatic Surgery Professor Le Trung Hai said the Southeast Asian country has around 40,000 hepatitis B and C-related deaths.

So far, surgeons have performed over 180 liver, kidney transplants and more than 1,000 capsule endoscopy procedures have been carried out.

Simultaneously, hospitals have conducted hundreds of robot-assisted surgeries and thousands of other minimally invasive surgeries on patients with liver, disorders of the pancreas.

2 Import-Export

2.1 Vietnam taps pharma imports with 2nd multinational license

Vietnam's pharmaceutical expenditure per capita is expected to jump to $85 million in 2020. Photo by Pixabay.

AstraZeneca Vietnam Co. Ltd has obtained licensing to import pharmaceuticals to become the country's second multinational supplier.

The English-Swedish trading company was granted the Certificate of Satisfaction of Conditions for Pharmacy Business by the Ministry of Health.

Nitin Kapoor, Chairman at AstraZeneca Vietnam, said: "The license allows us to take a significant step towards transforming our business model to provide patients faster access to innovative medicines and contribute to the development of the Vietnamese healthcare sector."

This accreditation turned AstraZeneca Vietnam into the second lawful multinational importer in the drug production industry after France's Sanofi-Aventis Vietnam, granted permission in June.

Vietnam's government issued a decree allowing multinational pharmaceuticals to join the medicine import sector in May 2017. Under the policy, medication could be imported and managed directly by multinationals to help stabilize supply, quicken distribution and ensure quality.

According to U.S.-based consulting firm Pacific Bridge Medical, Vietnam belongs to the group experiencing strong industry growth, with a pharmaceutical market value of $4.6 billion in 2017. The nation's pharmaceutical expenditure per capita remained at $56 million in 2017, expected to jump to $85 million in 2020.

However, the sector relies heavily on external sources with an average 55 percent of medicines imported every year. In 2018, Vietnam spent $2.8 billion on imported medication, exporting products worth a mere $113 million.
3 Event

3.1 26th International Medical, Hospital & Pharmaceutical expo opens in Hanoi

NDO – The 26th International Medical, Hospital and Pharmaceutical Exhibition (Vietnam Medi-pharm Expo) was opened in Hanoi on December 5 with the participation of 180 companies from 18 countries and territories.

With an exhibition area of 7,500m2, the expo gathers 220 pavilions featuring modern medical equipment, high-quality pharmaceuticals, and diverse health care products.

This is also the first time the expo saw an exhibition space of the Indonesian Embassy and the Indonesian Medical Device Producers Association.

“Vietnam Medi-pharm Expo is an important trade promotion channel for Vietnamese and foreign enterprises in the medical and pharmaceutical area to meet, exchange and learn from each other to attract investment in the Vietnamese market while creating opportunities for Vietnamese firms to seek partners and expand markets to countries in the region and the world”, said Nguyen Dinh Anh, head of the Emulation and Commendation Department under the Health Ministry.

A number of seminars and business matching programmes will be included within the expo which will run until December 7. The event is expected to attract approximately 10,000 visitors.

The event was jointly held by the Vietnam Pharmaceutical Companies Association and the Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

4 International cooperation

4.1 Vietnam values relations with Germany: Deputy PM

Deputy PM and FM Pham Binh Minh (R) receives State Secretary of the German Federal Foreign Office Andreas Michaelis in Hanoi on December 5. (Photo: VGP)

NDO/VNA – Vietnam attaches much importance to the relations with Germany, its key partner in the Europe as well as the European Union (EU), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh said on December 5.

Receiving State Secretary of the German Federal Foreign Office Andreas Michaelis, Deputy PM Minh hailed the outcomes of the fifth meeting of the Vietnam - Germany Strategic Management Group, with the adoption of the Plan of Action for the 2019-2020 period, and various cooperative agreements in the fields of politics, security, defence and labour, among others.

He said that the strategic partnership between the two nations lays solid foundation for them to step up ties in the time ahead, particularly in economy, trade and investment.

He expressed his hope that Germany, playing a leading role in the EU, will work to accelerate the approval of the EU - Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the Investment Protection Agreement (IPA), making contributions to facilitating trade between Vietnam and Germany and the EU as a whole.

Andreas Michaelis, for his part, said he rejoiced at the fruitful Vietnam - Germany strategic partnership, affirming efforts to elevate the relations to a new high in the future. Germany endorses the Vietnam - EU relations as well as the ratification of the EVFTA and IPA, he said, wishing both sides will closely coordinate at international organisations and forums, particularly when they are both serving as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council during 2020-2021, Vietnam will perform the role of the ASEAN Chair 2020, and Germany will hold the EU presidency in the second half of 2020.
He also stated that Germany supports the maintenance of order in the East Sea via peaceful means and with respect for international law.


4.2 Germany holds training course for Vietnamese health business managers

Berlin (VNA) – The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany (BMWi), the German Agency for International Cooperation, and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry held a closing ceremony in Berlin on November 30 for a training course for Vietnamese business managers in the health sector.

During the four-week course, 18 Vietnamese managers were trained in c, took fact-finding trips, and set up ties with partners in the fields of health care and pharmaceuticals in German cities. Speaking at the event, a BMWi representative said the ministry will further step up ties with Vietnam in health care, including holding more training courses for Vietnam’s managerial staff.

Vietnamese Ambassador to Germany Nguyen Minh Vu said health care has been one of the priorities in Vietnam – Germany ties over the past years. Germany has assisted Vietnam in upgrading health care infrastructure, hospital equipment, medical waste treatment, and developing telemedicine model, through which Vietnam’s central and local medical establishments acquired Germany’s expertise in the fields of medicine, disease prevention and diagnosis. He said the recent signing of the European Union – Vietnam Free Trade Agreement and the Investment Protection Agreement holds significance for bilateral economic-trade exchange via cutting tariff and allowing foreign enterprises to join bidding in public sectors, including health care.

With an advanced medicine and the largest European health care market worth 374 billion EUR in 2017, Germany puts focus on exports in the field of health care and is one of the world’s largest suppliers and exporters of health care products and services. Its revenue from medical technology neared 30 billion EUR in 2017, 64 percent of which was from exports. Meanwhile, earnings from the
export of pharmaceutical products and services amounted to 75.4 billion EUR, and spending on research and development by pharmaceutical companies hit 6.2 billion EUR.

The BMWi has launched the “Health Made in Germany” initiative with an aim to boost exports in the medical industry via helping foreign companies establish contact with German partners and suppliers./.

Source: https://en.vietnamplus.vn/germany-holds-training-course-for-vietnamese-health-business-managers/164612.vnp

4.3 Vietnam wants WHO’s support to better healthcare system: Deputy PM

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam hopes to receive further assistance from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to improve the country’s healthcare system, including disease prevention, primary health care and building healthcare law, said Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam.

Hosting a reception for WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Takeshi Kasai in Hanoi on December 17, Deputy PM Dam spoke highly of WHO’s assistance for Vietnam in the past four decades, particularly in prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, expanded immunization programme, human resources training, and health insurance, among others.

Vietnam is willing to continue cooperation with the WHO towards building a modern and complete healthcare system that helps improve living quality in the country and achieve targets set in the national strategy on public health protection and health care for 2020-2030 period, he stressed.

For his part, Takeshi Kasai, briefed the host on WHO’s plan to reform the healthcare system in the direction of expanding access to quality medical services at suitable costs for Vietnamese people.

He presented the WHO’s recommendations to the Vietnamese government regarding mid and long-term policies in several priority fields, including developing strong primary healthcare facilities, and applying the same price for the same service at hospitals of all levels./.

Source: https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-wants-whos-support-to-better-healthcare-system-deputy-pm/165644.vnp
5 Digitalisation

5.1 HCM City fosters development of smart healthcare

Participants discuss smart healthcare at a workshop held in HCM City (Source: VNA)

HCM City (VNA) – Ho Chi Minh City has invested extensively in smart healthcare development, with a focus on healthcare big data platform and the use of information technology in hospital management and expertise management, said a municipal health official.

HCM City-based hospitals are required to create electronic medical records of international standards for local residents, said Tang Chi Thuong, Deputy Director of the municipal Department of Health. Each citizen would have a single national patient identifier, he said while speaking at a workshop on smart healthcare in HCM City on December 14. Thu Duc District Hospital was the first medical centre in the city getting approval from the Ministry of Health to create electronic medical records, he said, adding that many hospitals were set to follow suit.

To develop smart healthcare, the city would first build a smart emergency medical response centre and a database on disease surveillance, he said. Since 2016 the department has been calling for the use of IT in hospital administration. A lot of specialised software has been developed for managing medical workers, patient health records, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and health warehouses.

Many hospitals have adopted artificial intelligence to enhance their treatment quality, including robot-assisted surgery by Binh Dan Hospital and 115 People’s hospital. Le Thanh Liem, Vice Chairman of the municipal People’s Committee, said the extensive use of IT in the health sector had shown positive results and contributed to the development of a smart city in future. In 2017, the city finalised the project to become a smart city in 2017-2020. It involves the development of an information technology platform for a smart city and technology solutions in many areas such as traffic, environment, public security, and healthcare.
Experts said in a smart hospital the software is fully inter-connected to actively support technical and professional activities and improve medical examination and treatment and hospital management.

The workshop attracted 300 hospital managers, doctors and international health experts./.


5.2 E-prescriptions to replace written versions nationwide

Thu Duc District’s Hospital in HCM City is one of the healthcare facilities applying electronic medical records. (Photo: VNA)

Hanoi (VNS/VNA) - Written medical records could be on their way out, as pilot software will allow patients to use codes to access their e-prescriptions on a national online prescription system.

Speaking at a recent workshop, Associate Professor Luong Ngoc Khue, director of Medical Services Administration under the health ministry, said the software would be applied across the country at all public and private healthcare facilities after a recently launched pilot in Ha Tinh and Hung Yen provinces.

According to Khue, among nearly 50,000 medical facilities nationwide, 95 percent have prescription management software. However, the data is not synchronised, making it difficult to share data among facilities.

Up to 70 percent of pharmacies have medicine management software but still sell medicine without prescriptions.

At private medical facilities, prescriptions are written so it is difficult to track who prescribed the medicine and to ensure the prescribed medicine is sold to patients.

"Since the software is applied nationwide, written medical records will be replaced with technology," he said.

All prescriptions sent from healthcare facilities nationwide would be saved on the software and shared with patients and medicine suppliers.

The e-prescriptions would be connected with e-medical records.
Through the system, only prescribed medicines could be sold to avoid the abuse of antibiotics and controlled medicine.

“Patients can track the names of doctors who prescribed the medicine to ask for repeat prescriptions and give feedback. Data will be saved on the system to identify prescription violations,” he said.

Patients would be also warned of outdated and prohibited medicine.

Nguyen Ha, an office worker in Hanoi’s Hoan Kiem district, said “The national e-prescription is such a good idea to manage prescription in the era of 4.0. My parents and children have to go to hospitals for health check-ups regularly. It's more convenient without having to bring written prescriptions. I only need to tell the pharmacist the code to buy medicine.”

The system is being piloted in Ha Tinh and Hung Yen and has been assessed as operating smoothly so far. The pilot is set to end in a year.

All prescriptions have been sent to the software and shared with the health ministry, local health departments and healthcare facilities. Pharmacies have received the prescriptions and sold medicine following the prescriptions.

With only one code for each prescription, patients can buy medicine anywhere in Vietnam.

In 2018, the health ministry launched a software to connect medicine supplying facilities. This year the ministry has made a move with online prescriptions in order to push towards electronic healthcare./.

Source: https://en.vietnamplus.vn/eprescriptions-to-replace-written-versions-nationwide/166192.vnp

5.3 HCM City hospital introduces a nurse robot to help patients

Võ Hồng Quân, director of the Centre of Information and Technology under the Eastern People Military Hospital in HCM City (left), introduces the nurse robot named Tâm. — VNA/VNS Photo Xuân Khu
HCM CITY — Tấm’s role as a nurse at the Eastern People Military Hospital in HCM City is crucial to the health and wellbeing of patients.

And despite plenty of hard work on a daily basis, you will not find her complaining about being tired – although you may have to charge the nurse from time to time.

Tấm is the first ‘robot’ nurse to help clinical staff perform routine work. She has the appearance of a nurse, complete with tradition clothing worn by other medical staff at the hospital. Tấm is designed to be able to move around, have face recognition system, remember certain tasks such as remembering patients’ name and giving patients directions. And the robotic medic can also have conversation with patients about medical issues, nutrition diets, and measures to prevent popular illnesses. An electronic board is designed to help patients look up the list of hospital fees and allow medical appointments to be made by specialists. The nurse robot has turned the hospital into a highlight of HCM City’s medical industry in applying information technology to build a smart healthcare system for patients.

Colonel Trương Hoàng Việt, director of the Eastern People Military Hospital, said the robot was the result of application of intelligent technology, which was built on the basis of the universal connectivity technology. The robot had the ability to identify faces and also break down language barriers. But if that’s not enough, Tấm also can identify and stop careless actions or behaviours such as smoking in the hospital campus or littering.

The nurse robot is among sixteen initiatives in which the hospital has applied information technology to improve medical examinations and treatment quality. Patients can access medical support from high-technology equipment. Four smart registration kiosks have been installed to help people quickly carry out registration procedures without requiring the guidance of medical staff.

By simply inserting a medical insurance card or a flashcard supplied by the hospital to the infrared eye for identification, all patient information will be recorded. After patients choose the content of examination, the screen will immediately display the clinic they need to go for check-up and treatment. These kiosks can check the validity of a health insurance card, capture patients’ image with the front camera, and work closely with the hospital’s overall management software to receive patients’ feedback on service quality.
A patient is using smart registration kiosk at Eastern People Military Hospital in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo

The hospital has also implemented a range of other IT applications such as Room Access Control System, Disabled Robot Arm, and smart medical record cabinets.

Lê Thị Mến, a 72-year-old patient living in District 9’s Long Bình Ward, said she was surprised by the changes in the hospital over the years.

“I am very interested in the machines that the hospital has been equipped with from the lobby to the toilet. Auto technology products are everywhere to give us instructions,” she said.

Explaining about the information technology development at the hospital, Colonel Việt said the hospital was the first to be given financial autonomy in the country, so it faced various difficulties.

Old and degraded facilities as well as a shortage of medical staff has reduced the quality of medical examination and treatment. Therefore, the number of patients coming to seek medical treatment was very few.

“We were concerned about how to improve the hospital’s quality while maintaining the cost of treatment and the number of staff,” Việt said.

“There was only one way - application of information technology to solve the problem.”

That’s when the Information Technology Centre was founded.

The hospital’s Board of Directors had constantly developed creative ideas to improve the medical examination and treatment process based on the actual operational needs of the hospital.

A series of innovative ideas have been nominated by hospital staff and the centre helped turning them into high technology products.
Colonel Trịnh Ngoc Chí, deputy director of the hospital, said thanks to high-technology products, more people came to the hospital, rising from 700-800 patients in recent years to 1,800 patients at the peak per day.

The hospital’s management has also been easier. Chí said the board of directors would know what toilets needed to be cleaned and what areas were overloaded with patients via smart medical monitoring system.

Chí said the hospital would continue promoting the application of information technology in hospital management and operation, especially artificial intelligence to give the best services to patients. — VNS

3D Printing technology is already being in use at Eastern People Military Hospital in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo

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