

A Sense of Elation in Portugal

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The hospital system reform in Portugal has opened up a new market for private clinics. In Lisbon, private hospital operator Espírito Santo Saúde has opened one of the most modern private hospitals in Europe and relies on the holistic approach of Siemens in this project.

By Manuel Meyer



The Portuguese healthcare system is on the move towards private hospital investments.

“We have realized a dream,” says Ivo Antão. The Chief Information, Organization and Processes Officer (CIO) of the Espírito Santo Saúde (ESS) Group proudly guides visitors through the brand-new Hospital da Luz in Lisbon, which is among the most modern private hospitals not only in Portugal, but the rest of Europe as well. The private hospital operator, part of the Espírito Santo investment group, maintains 14 smaller healthcare centers, private hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities in Portugal.

The new showpiece hospital, with its 150 acute-care beds, has all the clinical competences of a general hospital, including more than 40 clinical specialties. In addition, as part of an Integrated Healthcare Complex, Hospital da Luz also comprises a Nursing Home unit with 130 beds and a Residential Home for seniors with 115 private apartments, providing the complete spectrum of care in a single location, which makes this arrangement unique in Portugal. “It is the first hospital we have built and managed ourselves

from the very beginning,” explains Antão. This prestige project of the ESS Group is an important strategic move in a market slowly opening to private initiatives. Some 400 physicians, 250 nurses, and 200 technicians and support personnel work at Hospital da Luz.

Restructure of Hospital System

As in other countries, the Portuguese Government is looking to optimize hospital investments. The government has to save



where it can. As part of the reforms, the hospital system was subjected to a far-reaching restructuring phase. With healthcare costs rising by more than ten percent annually and a quickly aging population (by 2025, more than 20 percent of the Portuguese population will be over 65), reform was inescapable. The objective is to drastically reduce the rise in healthcare costs while simultaneously increasing quality and efficiency. Many patients in Portugal find the current wait times for examinations and surgery to be particularly annoying; for some, those wait times may even become dangerous. Over the past four years, the number of privately insured persons has risen steadily. Physicians and hospital personnel complain of antiquated facilities and equipment. As part of the reforms, the government is relying on private management structures and initiatives to build new hospitals and modernize existing facilities.

Good Business Opportunities for Private Hospital Operators

Despite its relatively small population of 11 million, Portugal is an extremely interesting market for private hospital operators. There are 84 general public hospitals compared to 60 private clinics. Most of these are small private hospitals with few specialty departments. As a result, the Portuguese healthcare system remains firmly in government hands when compared to other European Union (EU) countries. However, the government is increasingly opening the market to private initiatives. Through its subsidiary Espírito Santo Saúde, the Espírito Santo Group has become firmly established in

the healthcare provision sector. In addition to having one of the largest private and investment banks and insurance companies in the country, the group has a significant presence in sectors such as travel and tourism, real estate, and construction. Although the parent company has been active in the healthcare sector for decades through its health insurance provider Companhia de Seguros Tranquilidade and in the managed care business through Advance Care, ESS was founded just seven years ago.

ESS relied on close and intensive cooperation with Siemens as a strategic partner for information and medical technology as well as in the building infrastructure area. While some Siemens business units were already involved in other ESS private hospitals and healthcare centers, numerous Siemens business units worked together at Hospital da Luz, including Siemens Enterprise Communications (SEN), Siemens Building Technologies (SBT), Industrial Solutions & Services (I&S), Automation & Drives (A&D), as well as Siemens Medical Solutions with its imaging modalities and Soarian® information technology (IT) and workflow management system. Soarian is the next generation of Siemens IT solutions that helps healthcare organizations to manage clinical, administrative, and financial processes. Its key components include Soarian Clinicals, Soarian Departmentals, and Soarian Scheduling.

A Mammoth Project for Siemens

There was a reason behind it all: "Naturally, we could have looked to see which company made the best offer in each area," says Antão. But integrating numerous

companies in such a large project would add an increasing degree of complexity and risk, according to the CIO. Should problems occur, it is better to only have to turn to one company. And often, systems or embedded processes from various companies do not articulate well.

"For this reason, we looked for a partner who could offer not only a broad palette of products, but also a solution-oriented approach, and the best offer in this regard came from Siemens," explains Antão.

As a result, almost the entire infrastructure of the 96,000-square-meter Hospital da Luz was installed by one of the Siemens business units, from the fire alarm and security system, to the lighting system, local area network (LAN) communication cables and the air conditioning system, to medical devices and IT. A mammoth project without comparison in the corporation's almost 100 years in Portugal. The cooperation with Siemens is the result of a "good, long-term partnership," and can be explained by the new demands regarding modern private hospitals, according to Antão.

Previously, private hospitals found their market niche through better food, nicer rooms, and shorter wait times. Today, however, that is not enough, says Antão. In the private sector, the infrastructure of hospitals and rehabilitation facilities has to meet ever increasing patient requirements. "In addition to having the best medical and nursing staff, modern communications systems, state-of-the-art equipment, and innovative medical and information technology are playing an increasingly important role," he explains. In order to gain recognition against other private hospital operators, one has to work with the best suppliers. "Especially

“When looking at the integration of various information technologies, Siemens appeared to be the only company with the corresponding capacity.”

Ivo Antão, CIO, Espírito Santo Saúde, Lisbon, Portugal



Combining Soarian Health Information Management (HIM) and the HiMed Cockpit enables access to digital patient data directly at the bedside.

when looking at the integration of various information technologies, Siemens appeared to be the only company with the corresponding capacity," explains Antão.

Process Orientation Centered on the Patient

The IT, with solutions running from departmental systems, such as RIS/PACS (*syngo*® Suite), to an enterprise-wide electronic health record, implemented through Soarian, also played a major role in the decision to cooperate with Siemens. Today, Soarian supports care delivery processes

in more than 40 clinical specialties. One example is a diagnostic system for detecting sepsis, systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS), and septic shock in patients. In principle, this pathological finding refers to out-of-control blood poisoning or an infection that is extremely difficult to diagnose.

Soarian is also linked to the HiMed Cockpit. Hospital Director Professor Jose Roquette says: "With Soarian and the HiMed Cockpit system, we can immediately access patient data and medical records anywhere in the hospital, even at the patient's bedside, simplifying work enormously." He sees

the HiMed Cockpit linked to the Soarian system as trendsetting. It is not only available to physicians and nurses, who call up patient data directly at the hospital bed using special chip cards, but the system also offers patients high levels of comfort. "With their own hospital chip cards, patients can use the HiMed Cockpit to telephone, surf the Internet, watch TV, listen to the radio, order food or magazines online, or learn about their disease and treatment options from information we have entered into the system," adds Roquette. Another example is the ongoing project to link the building management

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Jose Roquette, Director, Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal

system (Siemens DESIGO™) to the scheduling systems: For example, if the air conditioning control system detects any deviations outside the normal scope, the respective operating room is not available to schedule procedures.

As a private company, ESS must work cost-effectively and efficiently. In this regard, the modern communication systems from Siemens, as well as Soarian, help in streamlining internal workflows and in eliminating unnecessary work for all staff. The result: fast, patient-centered organization of work instead of siloed departmental thinking, Antão explains.

This, in turn, results in shorter inpatient stays, better planning of ward workflows, less bureaucracy, and the elimination of expensive, unnecessary services, benefiting the hospital and its personnel, as well as the patients.

Portugal’s President Dedicates Hospital da Luz

Six months after opening in April 2007 is not enough time to make definitive statements regarding financial profitability or capacity and transaction numbers. The hospital first has to become known. But that should not be a problem: The public and the media are celebrating the hospital as a symbol showing the way toward a new healthcare system. In April 2007, Portugal’s President, Cavaco Silva, was on hand to personally dedicate the country’s

most modern private hospital. Accompanied by Portuguese Economics Minister Manuel Pinho and António Correia de Campos, the Minister of Health, Cavaco Silva explained at the dedication ceremony that Hospital da Luz is an example of how private initiatives would be playing an increasingly important role in the Portuguese healthcare system.

Manuel Meyer reports from Spain and Portugal as a correspondent for the Austria Press Agency (APA).

Further Information

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Summary

Challenge:

- One-stop solution for hospital building technology, hospital and imaging equipment, and hospital IT
- Integrated approach to hospital IT

Solution:

- Combining Siemens various business units to match customers’ demands
- Installation of Soarian as the core component of a clinical-oriented IT architecture
- Interfacing Soarian with Siemens IT solutions for facility management

Result:

- All clinical specialties rely on Soarian to support the care delivery process with an integrated view of patient clinical information, enabling them to center on patient care
- Hospital da Luz is an example of how private initiatives play an increasingly important role in the Portuguese healthcare system



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