

Stable HIV patients to be monitored remotely

Stable HIV patients can receive their medication prescriptions and laboratory results digitally

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Dit is de omschrijving

From now on, stable HIV patients can be monitored remotely via a secure app that allows them to view their laboratory results, prescriptions are sent by post or electronically. The GP carries out the monitoring in close collaboration with the patient. A two-year pilot project at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp (ITM) shows that this digital monitoring is highly appreciated by HIV patients and has no negative impact on the quality of care. Our doctors are busy rolling out the project to include all eligible HIV patients interested in this type of follow-up.

Thanks to highly active antiretroviral therapies, HIV has become a chronic disease in Belgium. This calls for monitoring methods that are better suited to the patient's lifestyle. ITM doctors and their HIV patients have tested the EmERGE app for two years now. On the basis of the laboratory results, the doctor determines whether the patient is stable and informs the patient of the results via the secure app. If the patient agrees, he or she will be able to get a remote consultation and receive his/her prescriptions by post or electronically. They will still need to book an appointment to get a blood test.

"The new app puts the patient even more centre-stage. His or her health data are always within reach, even when visiting the GP. The benefits for the patient include time savings, and saving money on transportation costs, while the GP can focus on more complicated cases. The app also proved its worth during the COVID-19 lockdown, when visits to the clinic were kept to a minimum. We were able to stay in touch with our patients via the app," says ITM physician Ludwig Apers.

The app, free of charge, has some additional components such as a pill intake reminder, confirmation of medication taken, an appointment reminder, etc. All HIV patients still receive a check-up from their attending physician at least once a year.

The digital follow-up is the result of 'EmERGE', an EU-funded research project. The new monitoring method was also tested and approved in HIV clinics in England, Croatia, Spain and Portugal. The app was developed by Podmedics with content input from the EmERGE project researchers and users.