

## ‘Medication at Home’: bringing healthcare services closer to the patient

### Centro Hospitalar de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal

#### What was the challenge?

The Pharmaceutical Services of the Centro Hospitalar de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (CHTMAD), in Vila Real, Portugal, has a monthly average of 750 users who collect their medication in-person from the hospital premises. Many of these users are vulnerable or elderly patients, who have poor access to transport. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many patients within this group refused to travel to CHTMAD to collect their medication due to fears of virus transmission and so requested home delivery of their medication.

#### What was the task?

CHTMAD instigated a special project – ‘Medication at Home’ - focused on delivering medicines to patients’ homes in partnership with other local, institutional stakeholders in the non-profit sector.

#### What was the action?

Through this project, local government agencies and the regional fire brigade collected medicines from CHTMAD and delivered them to patients across 13 different municipalities.

#### What were the results?

In its first month of operation, the ‘Medication at Home’ model served around 300 patients, with orders typically being fulfilled in a 48-period. Since its establishment, approximately 50% of CHTMAD’s pharmaceutical services’ normal patient cohort have benefited from the project.

There is a great advantage of ‘convenience’ for users enrolled on the scheme as it eliminates travel and transportation costs for patients, who in some cases had to turn to family members, forcing them to miss days of work.

Moreover, the scheme has helped to safeguard the wellbeing of healthcare professionals – limiting non-essential person-to-person contact between staff and patients - who were otherwise needed to delivery critical care within the hospital.

#### What were the lessons learnt?

Communication was a central tenet to the success of this model. To ensure the support of the different municipalities involved in the project, it was necessary to win the support of municipal leaders and have direct channels of communications in place with these stakeholders to answer their queries, relay changes in project protocol, etc.

Going forward, as the service has been so well-received by users, the ‘Medication at Home’ model will be expanded into further municipalities served by CHTMAD, with more institutional partners participating in the delivery to patients.

The COVID-19 pandemic created this opportunity acting as a much needed catalyst for a reorganisation of CHTMAD’s pharmaceutical services, and broader collaboration in the provision of healthcare across different institutional partners in Vila Real.