

French Guiana telemedicine network



Initiated nearly 20 years ago as part of a partnership between the Andrée Rosemon Hospital in Cayenne (CHAR), the French Space Agency (CNES) and the Institute of Space Medicine and Physiology (MEDES), the telemedicine network in French Guiana was born out of a cooperation that allowed for the implementation of a remote consultation experiment via satellite. The results were conclusive and French Guiana has set up this network in an operational way. New services were progressively added, and today it carries out about 2000 consultations per year and records more than 20,000 epidemiological declarations.

This network is a historical reference for MEDES, but also more widely for e-health. Today, it includes 20 equipped health centers and 10 medical disciplines. Today, this network is cited as a model for France's overseas departments and territories.



French Guiana had few health professionals, limited technical facilities and telecommunications, and its major centers were accessible only by river or air. For the populations of the department's interior, health care remained well below the services offered to urban residents.

To remedy this situation and facilitate access to specialists for isolated populations, the use of telemedicine was considered. An evaluation experiment took place in Guyana in the 2000s, with the provision of a telemedicine kit.

Based on the success of this evaluation, the system was implemented in a more comprehensive manner and has been used routinely since then.

It has been regularly improved and new features have been added:

- * In addition to the original medical specializations (parasitology, dermatology, and cardiology), the system has incorporated new ones: ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, imaging (neurosurgery), diabetology, oncology, and trauma.

Several new extensions followed:

- * Installation of the epidemiological surveillance and activity monitoring module,
- * Creation of a gateway between the telemedicine server and the Cayenne hospital laboratory results server, which reduces transmission times and automates the sending of test results to the health center concerned.
- * Extension of the network to the coastal health centers to avoid long travels, especially in dermatology.
- * Establishment of a "community medicine-hospital" network involving private physicians.