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A national project

SESAM-Vitale, which was rolled out in 1998 had, by the end of 2010, linked more than 282,000 healthcare professionals with all contributors and their beneficiaries aged 16 and over; there are therefore more than 50 million microprocessor cards in circulation.

The first version of the smart card was available in 1998. Since May 2007 it has gradually been replaced by a new generation card, the Vitale 2, which includes a photograph of the insured person and is more sophisticated in terms of technology and encryption security.

The Vitale card contains information of an administrative nature that is necessary for the refunding of medical expenses (identity, healthcare organization and insurance fund affiliation), but no medical information. The smart card is proof of the right of the card holder (and his beneficiaries) to cover for health expenditure to be provided by a health service organization in France.

By identifying the holder and his/her affiliation to an organization, and by verifying his/her rights, this card acts as an essential component of the SESAM-Vitale system for the creation and standardized, secure transmission of health care invoices.

Upon presentation of the smart card, the medical expense claim form will be drawn up and beneficiaries assured of speedy reimbursement for medical care received from healthcare professionals who employ

this system. In pharmacies and with some other healthcare professionals, it exempts the contributor from making advance payment of the part to be refunded by the health insurance, in a system whereby a proportion of the fee for medical treatment is paid directly to the provider by the patient's insurer. Without it, the patient cannot enjoy these administrative and financial benefits.

The SESAM-Vitale system eliminates the need for the paper-based documents that were previously required for the reimbursement of medical expenses (medical expense claim forms, tear-off portions of invoices, etc). It is based on two main principles: paperless data entry at source of the medical expense claim form with the implementation of electronic data exchange between the healthcare professionals and the compulsory and complementary health insurance organizations (since 2005) and the coding of treatments.

See also...

99% of pharmacists and more than 82% of general practitioners are using the SESAM-Vitale system in France in 2011. The paperless medical expense claim requires the presence of the patient's card and the health professional's card

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