

Online COVID-19 testing is a common practice in Germany and the United Kingdom. The Czech Republic lacks telemedicine laws.

Prague, 10 August 2021 – Online testing offered by Doctor on the Phone (*Doktor na telefonu*) in the Czech Republic relies on experience gained in other countries as well as on a legal analysis the company has commissioned from a Czech law firm. Similar services consisting of a video test administered with the aid of a physician are commonplace in such countries as Germany and the United Kingdom. The Czech Republic, however, lacks the necessary legislation. Doctor on the Phone has reached out to the Czech Health Ministry to discuss the situation.

One of the leading players in the online testing segment in the United Kingdom is Health Technologies Ltd and its online testing product Qured. A Qured test is essentially identical to tests offered by the Doctor on the Phone in the Czech Republic. The client buys a testing kit and makes an online appointment with a physician. A test is administered under the physician's constant supervision at a prearranged time.

Germany is another country where this approach to testing is used. Specifically, online testing is provided by DLMC GmbH from North Rhine-Westphalia, which offers its product via the [onlineschnelltest.de](https://www.onlineschnelltest.de) website.

France has gone even further than Germany and the United Kingdom, and accepts self-tests administered under the supervision of a medical specialist. The French government has resorted to this strategy with a view to increasing the scope of testing. According to Health Minister Olivier Veran, online testing is better than no testing.

The core of the matter is that all of the three abovementioned countries, where online testing is a common practice, have highly advanced telemedicine laws. In contrast, telemedicine legislation is completely absent in the Czech Republic.

"Due to the absence of specific telemedicine laws in the Czech Republic, the video testing process has been designed to comply with the Recommended Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures for Telemedicine issued by the Society of General Practice. These recommendations are essentially the only points of reference for physicians who want to practice telemedicine as part of providing distance medical care," explains Doctor on the Phone Director Marek Chatrný.

In recent days, Doctor on the Phone has sent several inquiries directly to Minister of Health Adam Vojtěch. The outcome: the ministry harbors an unsympathetic attitude to online testing. *"The negative response will in no way make us give up. We want to be a partner to the Health Ministry in the process of drafting legislation for telemedicine services. We are prepared to work together with the ministry and other government authorities to achieve that goal. We are confident that the framework for the functioning of telemedicine will be defined in an objective manner,"* comments Chatrný.

To ensure the integrity of an antigen test administered during a video call with a medical specialist, the tested individual is first duly identified by showing his or her identification card to the camera. Subsequently, the entire testing process is monitored and recorded using three images from the video conversation with the tested person. The images are archived in accordance with the GDPR and applicable EU laws.

As soon as the test is completed, the medical specialist automatically records the result in the ISIN system and in the Smart Quarantine system, which is fully integrated with the Europe-wide Covid Pass system. A test certificate is issued by the ISIN system in the European Union's standardized Covid Pass format available via the Tečka application or the ISIN (UZIS) website at <https://ocko.uzis.cz/>. Certificates can be verified using the čTečka application or other similar applications used in other EU Member States.

Online antigen testing by Doctor on the Phone is completely safe and suitable for everyone. The service was launched in the Czech Republic in January 2021. Online testing is most frequently used by individuals travelling abroad by rail who need to determine their COVID-19 status instantaneously. If their test is negative, they receive the necessary certificate in the form of the EU Covid Pass. Business partners of Doctor on the Phone who use its online testing service include transport companies and travel agencies. One such frequent user is RegioJet passenger carrier.

Doctor on the Phone does not carry out the testing process. Rather, the company has developed a software solution facilitating the delivery of distance healthcare by physicians. Tests have the form of a video call with a qualified medical specialist from SochORL, a Czechia-based medical clinic run by Tomáš Sochor, MD, which possesses all of the necessary permits from the regional authority and the regional public health authority to provide testing services in the region.

"We have encountered no technical issues thus far. We are currently working on reinforcing the technology with the aim of boosting serviceability and the available capacity," says Chatrný.

In providing its online testing service, Doctor on the Phone primarily relies on NewGene antigen testing kits, which have been approved not only in the Czech Republic, but in all other EU Member States as well. *"Nonetheless, clients can use other antigen test kits approved in the EU,"* Chatrný adds.

Before an antigen test is administered, the tested person provides personal data to the extent needed for performing the test and for recording the result in the person's medical file in the Czech Republic. At the same time, the tested individual consents to the performance of the test and to personal data processing.

A description of the service and the online testing procedure is available online at www.onlinetestovani.cz.