

Interview: Jorge Sequeira - Country Manager, Cerner Portugal



"There is vast potential in healthcare, and the data is so massive—far more significant than banking or telecommunications— that we need help in harnessing the potential of this information to provide the best healthcare solutions."

16.07.2018

Tags: [Portugal](#), [Cerner](#), [Healthcare](#), [Digitalization](#), [EMR](#)

Sequeira, general manager for Cerner Portugal, sheds light on Portuguese prowess in healthcare technology

Jorge. Jorge covers themes ranging from revolutionizing electronic medical records (EMR), uptake of new technologies in healthcare and Cerner Portugal's overall mission of promoting health, rather than treating disease.

Would you be able to introduce yourself and the Portuguese product offering to our international readers?

I have over 20 years' experience in the healthcare sector having started in sales for medical devices, before moving into management areas. I took over management positions in business consulting and global offerings for healthcare providers. I thoroughly enjoyed consulting and observing how organizations work and how we can promote improvements in the sector. I naturally became more engaged in healthcare information technology. I had an epiphany understanding that technology is a facilitator but what really makes the difference is the people. Consequently, my primary focus is working with people to achieve goals.

Cerner Portugal promotes the original company offer, coupled with what was brought in by Siemens Health Services acquisition in 2015. We cover all parts of the electronic medical record segment. Not only do we provide services on the clinical side, but also on the administrative and

financial; this comprises our core offering. Today, with challenges that providers face, there are additional segments where we believe we can make a robust contribution.

We provide a tool whereby doctors, physicians, nurses and all healthcare professionals, can effectively connect all data. Data, analytics, artificial intelligence and integration at application/platform level but also connecting machine and application is our bread and butter.

[Featured_in]

How has Cerner evolved to reflect market trends?

In the past, medical devices in the hospital would be an island of information. Nowadays, integrating all information, effectively preventing mistakes and avoiding errors is the reality. Furthermore, Cerner concerns itself with solutions related to population health management. Our offer is not confined to the hospital walls; we see healthcare as something that can reach the citizen at home. We go beyond chronic diseases, being able to cover all healthcare issues that impact everyone's life. From gadgets that monitor heart rate, several physiological indicators, we seek to understand the prevalence of risk combined with the data from, for example, wearable technology.

In a company such as Cerner, nothing is an isolated vertical – everything must be integrated, from social determinants to complex health data. All these metrics combine to have a considerable impact on the probability of being healthier, living longer, and crucially, creating lower costs for healthcare systems and governments.

What success stories have you made known under your leadership?

First and foremost, the Portuguese market has gone through a detrimental crisis in the past five years, which created substantial pressure in terms of cost reduction and the requirement from the government and private players to reduce investment into the cost of solutions. Despite this, we were able to maintain our business, even growing in revenue, and keeping our strong foundations. Indeed, we benefit from higher dynamic growth from private initiatives than public, but this is predominantly because our economy is still leaving the crisis, and a resurgence is on its way.

Today, Cerner is a leader in healthcare information technology, and we can offer the next generation of EMR (electronic medical record) to the market. The platforms we see nowadays in healthcare tend to have an age range of 10 to 15 years, and therefore, are based on technologies that become less relevant. We must continue to answer new challenges including value-based healthcare, ensuring that we create value, for example, by embedding artificial intelligence in the

system.

One of the main reasons for our success is the Champalimaud Foundation (a private biomedical research foundation) project, which decided to try out our technology. Champalimaud has become a reference client and a crucial component to Portugal's success. We also nurture interest from other players in public and private spheres, and leverage on our installed base through value creation and quality adoption as fully compliant with joint commissions and national evaluation systems from accreditor agencies.

What role can healthcare tourism play in Portugal?

Healthcare tourism is an essential attracting factor for Portugal and a potential business area, and we believe we can make a difference in this market. Nonetheless, we must be able to show that our hospitals can offer good quality of care. The indicator is by comparing with others and observing better outcomes. We need to go further than merely saying that surgery went well, and understand what the implicit consequences, long term outcomes of each surgery, for example. To finance the model there are meaningful conversations about value-based healthcare, but today we see hospitals funded by the number of consultations and surgeries. We must move in the direction of value-based healthcare, and Cerner looks to provide the tools to support this.

What is your assessment of the future of healthcare sector, particularly in the face of Amazon and Google entering healthcare and information technology?

The healthcare sector is in a mature stage of operations. However, we are not yet using all the potential technology available at our fingertips, and the adoption of new trends is taking more time than expected.

It is a good sign that Big Data companies like Amazon (with whom we have a partnership for a cloud-based storage solution), and Google, (who have recently installed a large office in Lisbon), enter the healthcare world. These worldwide players bring a different approach to healthcare. There is vast potential in healthcare, and the data is so massive—far more significant than banking or telecommunications— that we need help in harnessing the potential of this information to provide the best healthcare solutions. Every human being is different, and everybody possesses different characteristics; therefore, we need to analyze the data effectively to assist physicians in making better decisions. I see Cerner as a complementary actor alongside the likes of Google and Amazon, because we have the tools that are critical for stakeholders to treat the citizen, and we can embed workflows to optimize processes. In essence, when dealing with petabytes of information, we need to harness all sources of technological assistance.

What strengths does Portugal put forward in this regard?

In Portugal, we have an excellent talent pool available to us, and at Cerner, we employ fantastic staff. From clinical stakeholders to software engineers, we observe a strong will to make progress, and a trend for high adoption rates of new technology from the Portuguese population. Indeed, the Portuguese are renowned for being tech-focused, for example, if we consider the new generation of nursing whereby professionals seek fast adoption of technology. In this environment, we can make a difference.

[related_story]

At a European level, Portugal benefits from funding from Horizon 2020. For Cerner, we must be on the edge of what the market offers, and it is my goal to pinpoint the projects and companies that will bring value to the system. Today for the Portuguese market, as more and more start-ups appear, there is a tremendous opportunity, because all these platforms require Cerner's services given our status as a company with an open platform.

Where will you lead Cerner in five years' time?

I would be happy to see that we are the partner of choice for the second wave of EMR's and that we are already able to put into practice pilot cases of population health management. My responsibility is to the country and Cerner, and we need a different approach in the way that we take care of the population. We have a community that is increasingly old, and we have lots of people that live alone in isolated zones, so we need more proximity to patients, and we need to take care of our aging population.

Finally, we must promote health rather than treat disease. Due to pressures from technologies and pharmaceutical companies, there will soon be a massive demand for greater healthcare budgets, and although Portugal's economy is on the right track, it needs to be able to fulfill that future burden on the healthcare system. We will have a thorough project taking place in the Nordics and the UK soon which relates to population health management. I intend to translate this project to Portugal soon. Although we are not on the front line, we see these projects come to fruition in a delay of two to three years in Portugal, by around 2020—when hopefully Portugal can replicate the success of the European Championships in 2016!

[See more interviews](#)