



# Bridging islands, transforming lives

How the Azores' Digital Hospital is redefining healthcare

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**T**he Azores, a remote Portuguese archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, is celebrated for its striking volcanic landscapes, lush terrain, and deep cultural roots. Comprising nine distinct islands – including the iconic Mount Pico and several UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the region attracts nature lovers and cultural travelers from around the world. But beyond its natural beauty, the Azores is now entering a new era of innovation. A groundbreaking Digital Hospital initiative is set to transform healthcare delivery across the islands, harnessing technology like Siemens Healthineers' eHealth Solutions to overcome geographic challenges and enhance patient care for the entire population.

Monica Seidi, Regional Secretary for Health and Social Security, explains, "The digital hospital is undoubtedly an innovative project for the regional Health Service and, of course, for the entire region." This initiative marks a leap forward in healthcare across the islands, using cutting-edge digital solutions to make healthcare more accessible and efficient for Azoreans.



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**Monica Seidi**  
Regional Secretary for Health and Social Security

## **A vision of integrated healthcare**

The Azorean government recognized the need for a Digital Hospital to unify healthcare systems across the region, allowing for immediate data sharing and improved patient care. “There is a need to create a digital hospital that integrates all the systems,” says José Paulo Brás, Director of IT Services at Hospital do Divino Espírito Santo de Ponta Delgada (HDES).

This project will connect healthcare units across the islands, making patient information readily available to healthcare providers, through an Electronic Health Record based on state-of-the-art interoperability standards. The Patient Portal stands as the main interface for patients to manage their own health – bringing together medical records, prescriptions, and appointments. This portal reflects the integration of multiple systems, enabling timely, accurate, and user-friendly healthcare access for Azoreans.


José Paulo Brás notes that this centralization “allows the use of diverse ecosystems from different healthcare units to interact with the Patient Portal,” creating a streamlined experience that puts healthcare within reach of Azoreans.

At the heart of a Digital Hospital is the meaningful connection between physicians, care teams, and patients. To strengthen this bond and make communication more immediate and personal, the Physician Portal was launched alongside the Patient Portal – enabling virtual consultations and timely access to care when patients need it most. While giving patients control over their health records is vital, it’s just as important for physicians to have a clear, immediate view of their patients’ health. This empowers them to make informed decisions and offer care that truly meets each patient’s needs. To further support this vision, Siemens Healthineers is introducing the Patient Chart – a user-friendly dashboard that brings together a patient’s health data in one place. Launching in September 2025 for physicians in Azores, the Patient Chart is designed to deepen understanding, strengthen relationships, and help physicians deliver care that feels more human. Together, these innovations aim to enhance physician efficiency while creating more meaningful patient engagement.


## Scope of the Digital Hospital of the Azores

- 9 Islands with 240,000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup>


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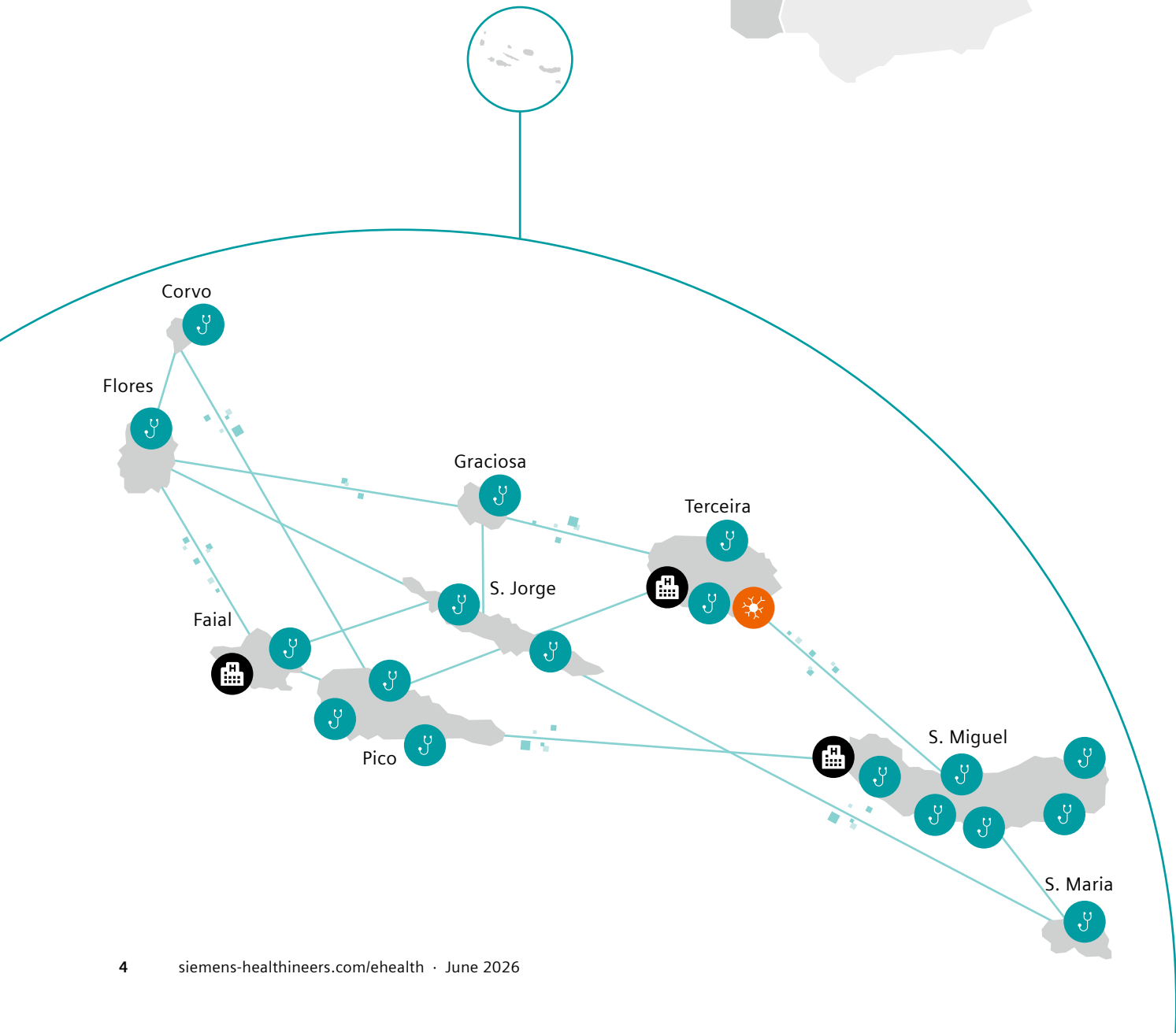
- 3 Hospitals 


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- 26 Health units (including health units and primary care centers) 

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- 1 Oncology center 





*“Putting together systems from different units, and making them communicate efficiently, has required extensive data mapping work.”*



**Luís Parreira**  
Regional Secretary IT Specialist  
at the Regional Health Directorate

## **Overcoming interoperability challenges**

Developing a fully interconnected healthcare system across nine islands is no small feat. It requires bridging multiple healthcare ecosystems, standardizing clinical information, and achieving interoperability across platforms. Catarina Carvalho, Investment Manager of the Digital Hospital, highlights the importance of this integration, stating that “Interacting with the Patient Portal requires integration with the Physician Portal and ensuring interoperability.”

Francisco Raposo, Director of Information Systems at Hospital do Santo Espírito da Ilha Terceira, explains that “For the Patient Portal to work, many lower layers must be operationalized.” This involves implementing modern standards of data management across healthcare facilities, extensive data mapping, and ensuring seamless communication between systems.

As Luís Parreira, IT Specialist at the Regional Health Directorate, points out, “Putting together systems from different units, and making them communicate efficiently, has required extensive data mapping work.” This integration goes beyond syntax to address the semantics of medical terminology, making sure that clinical and non-clinical terminologies are standardized for smoother interactions.

“The biggest challenge of interoperability is not syntax but semantics,” says Francisco Raposo, emphasizing the complexity of creating a common language for healthcare data across diverse systems.

## Coordinating multiple vendors

Another significant challenge has been coordinating the numerous vendors and stakeholders involved in the project. Each provider brings its own technology, tools, and protocols, making alignment essential to build a unified system.

“We are working with a large group of vendors who need to collaborate to consolidate all Azorean health information in this repository,” says José Paulo Brás. The project demands rigorous management and a shared commitment to putting patients at the center of healthcare.



*“Siemens Healthineers has demonstrated both expertise and commitment, managing the project and aligning efforts across the different components.”*

**Francisco Raposo**  
Director of Information Systems  
at Hospital do Santo Espirito da Ilha Terceira

Siemens Healthineers emerged as the ideal partner, not only for its technical expertise but also for its dedication to the project. “Siemens Healthineers has demonstrated both expertise and commitment, managing the project and aligning efforts across the different components,” adds Francisco Raposo.

This ambitious project, which aims to connect 3 central hospitals, 26 health units, and 6,000 healthcare professionals<sup>2</sup>, is set to transform healthcare across the nine islands. Siemens Healthineers is employing global standards like HL7 messaging, FHIR, and advanced web services to turn isolated data into actionable insights. These technologies enable immediate information sharing, reducing redundancy and ensuring that residents can access high-quality, efficient care.

But this initiative is more than technological – it’s a transformational shift in healthcare access and equity. By creating an integrated health system, the project aims to break down barriers and provide Azoreans access to timely medical care, whether they’re on a busy island or in a remote area. The project also targets to empower healthcare professionals with the tools they need to make faster, data-driven decisions, improving both efficiency and quality of care.



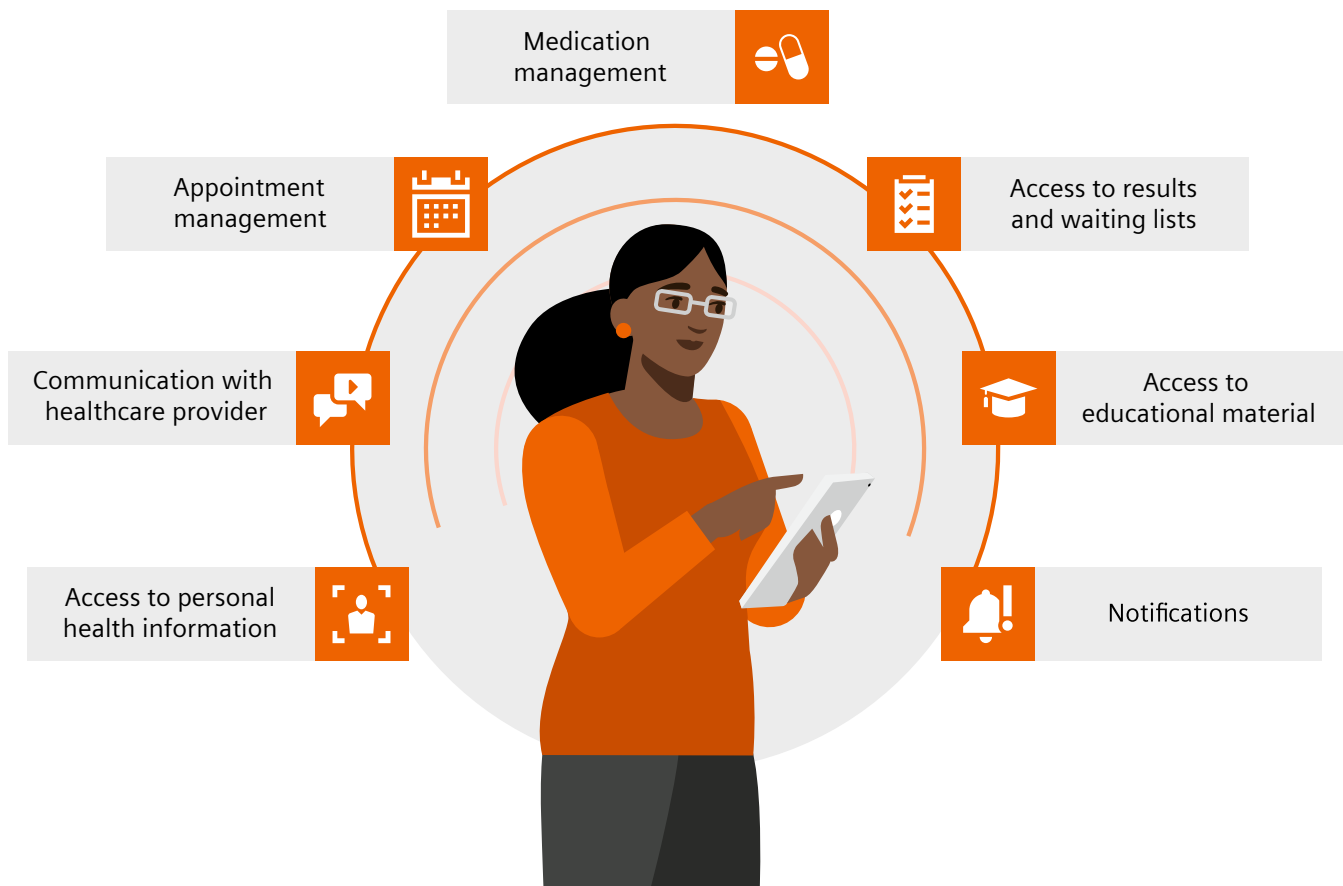
*“We are working with a large group of vendors who need to collaborate to consolidate all Azorean health information in this repository.”*

**José Paulo Brás**  
Director of IT Services  
at Hospital do Divino Espírito Santo de Ponta Delgada (HDES)

## Setting the stage for future integrations

The Digital Hospital project is designed not only to meet current healthcare needs but also to prepare the Azores for future integrations with the European Union and mainland

Portugal. As Francisco Raposo explains, “The goal is to prepare Azores archipelago to be at the highest level of technology, ready for future integrations.”



*“We are continuously developing the Patient Portal so that it aligns with patients’ needs, providing them with autonomy in their healthcare choices.”*

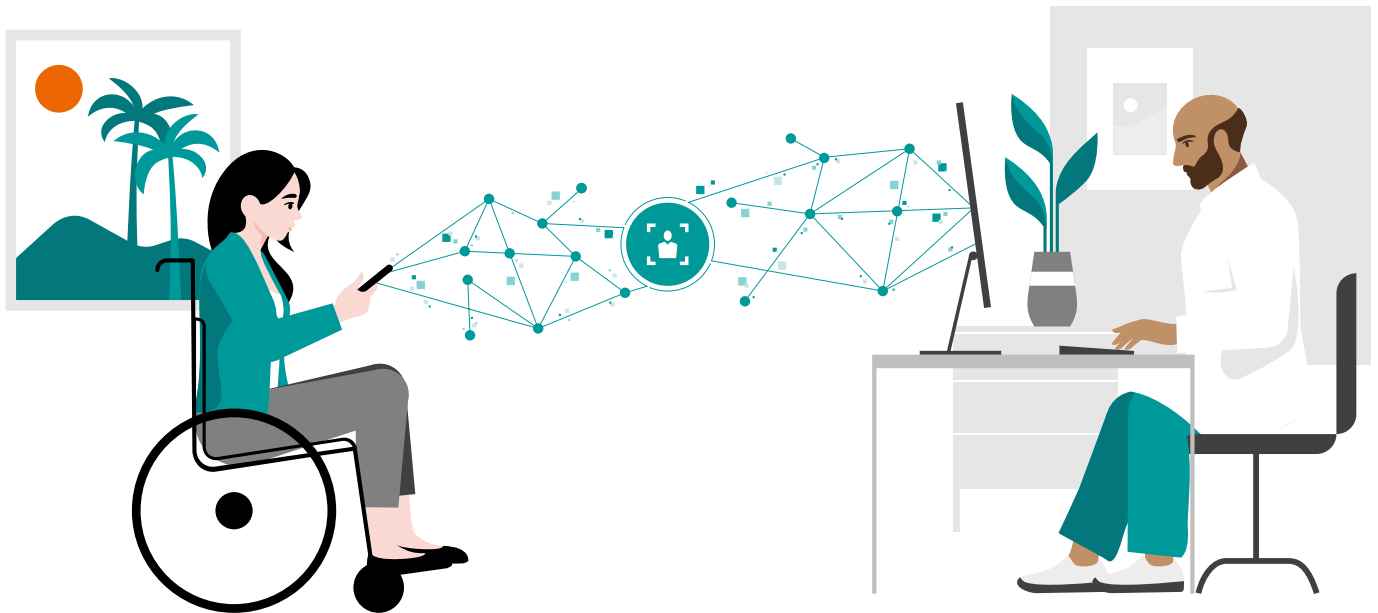


**Catarina Carvalho**  
Investment Manager of the Digital Hospital

## Empowering patients

Beyond equipping providers with valuable tools, the Digital Hospital project empowers patients, giving them greater control over their healthcare. “We are continuously developing the Patient Portal so that it aligns with patients’ needs, providing them with autonomy in their healthcare choices,” says Catarina Carvalho.

With access to medical information, appointment management, telehealth and prescriptions, patients will be able to take charge of their healthcare like never before, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement.



## A new paradigm in regional healthcare

“The Digital Hospital is the missing paradigm in the regional healthcare system,” says Monica Seidi. This project goal is to make Azores a leader in digital healthcare integration in Portugal, creating a patient-centered system that can serve as a model for other regions.

As the project unfolds, the Azorean community, healthcare providers, and government officials are working together to break down barriers to high-quality care. The Digital Hospital is embarking on a new era that focuses on patient needs and accessibility, transforming healthcare in the Azores and setting a sustainable foundation for generations to come.



Scenic view of Angra do Heroísmo, the capital of Terceira Island



Hospital do Santo Espírito da Ilha Terceira (HSEIT)

eHealth Solutions consist of several products. eHealth Virtual Visit and eHealth Stroke are manufactured by Siemens Healthineers, Erlangen, Germany. All other products of eHealth Solutions are manufactured by ITH icoserve technology for healthcare GmbH – A Siemens Healthineers Company, Innsbruck, Austria. Products of eHealth Solutions are not intended for diagnostic purposes. The product offerings are not commercially available in all countries. Please contact your local Siemens Healthineers organization for further information.

The statements by customers of Siemens Healthineers described herein are based on results that were achieved in the customer's unique setting. Because there is no "typical" hospital or laboratory and many variables exist (e.g., hospital size, samples mix, case mix, level of IT and/or automation adoption) there can be no guarantee that other customers will achieve the same results.

*1 Instituto Nacional de Estatística / Statistics Portugal. (2024, 18. June). [https://ra2019.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine\\_indicadores&contcto=pi&indOcorrCod=0000256&selTab=tab0](https://ra2019.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contcto=pi&indOcorrCod=0000256&selTab=tab0)*

*2 Secretaria Regional da Saúde e Desporto / Direção Regional da Saúde. Açores (2016-2021). Indicadores de Saúde. [https://portal.azores.gov.pt/documentos/37408/1912133/Indicadores\\_de\\_Saude\\_2016\\_2021.pdf](https://portal.azores.gov.pt/documentos/37408/1912133/Indicadores_de_Saude_2016_2021.pdf)*

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**Siemens Healthineers AG**

Siemensstr. 3  
91301 Forchheim  
Germany  
Phone: +49 9191 18-0  
siemens-healthineers.com