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M-health in Africa

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In a little over a decade, the African continent has become the world's second most connected region by mobile subscriptions, has witnessed the fastest growth in mobile subscribers in the world and is on track to hit one billion mobile subscriptions by 2015, according to Informa Telecoms. This widespread availability of mobile technology is an exceptional opportunity to introduce and expand the use of m-health in Africa. Developing countries face steady growth in the prevalence of chronic diseases, along with a continued burden from communicable diseases. M-health offers promise in responding to both types of disease burdens. More than any other modern technology, mobile phones are used throughout the developing world. Innovative applications of mobile technology to existing health care delivery and monitoring systems offer great promise for improving the quality of life. They make communication among medical doctors, laboratories, hospitals and patients easier, and as chronic disease becomes more prevalent, mobile technologies offer care strategies that are particularly suited to combating these conditions. No doubt, the rapid development in the telecommunication field and mobile technology has accelerated the introduction of telemedicine as a viable and reliable alternative. In keeping pace with advances in technology, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and World Health Organization (WHO) has recently formed a partnership called the 'mHealth' Initiative to use mobile technology, in particular text messaging and apps, to help combat non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and chronic respiratory diseases. In this presentation we intend to discuss the use of mobile health, that is, the use of mobile technology to improve health outcomes in low income countries. We examine various m-health applications and identify the benefits and the risks of each. We will discuss means of leveraging the current use of mobiles or smartphones in the continent to accommodate mHealth as a tool for development.

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The viewpoints of Saudi patients on privacy protection measures

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Background: With today's advance in Information Technology (IT) solutions and the associated increase in collected data, individual's privacy comes at risk. Public trust is crucial for any initiative and individuals need to be confident that their personal data are kept accurate and private. Privacy is a well-recognized notion in different cultures. Yet, different cultural settings have different perceptions and attitudes towards privacy.

Objectives: This study was conducted to investigate the measures of privacy protection that make Saudi patients feel more confident about the handling of their private information. To the best of our knowledge, no similar study was conducted on the Saudi population.

Materials & Methods: Using Q-Methodology, twenty-five respondents were given a set of twenty-five statements to rank according to their point of view using a sorting grid. The Q-sorts were then analyzed using a by-person factor analysis.

Results: The subjects clustered into four groups of viewpoints on privacy protection approaches; data governance, patient-empowerment, trust in provider, and distrust in the system. The data showed an association between the identified viewpoints and occupation of the participant but no association with other characteristics such as age, gender, education, health status, religion, and wealth.

Conclusions: As the adoption of informatics solution in healthcare becomes more widespread, policy makers will need to ensure that patients' information remains safe. Recommendations for policy changes are discussed for the following areas, patient empowerment, written procedures on privacy practices, routine auditing and limits on access to healthcare information.

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