



eHEALTH PROGRAMME REFERENCE IMPLEMENTATION IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

SAHR KWIK SKWIZ SERIES

This KWIK SKWIZ:



summarises Chapter 3 of the 2014/15 South African Health Review.

- The eHealth Strategy for South Africa is a roadmap for achieving a well-functioning, patient-centred electronic national health information system. The strategy ensures that the integrated national patient-based information system will be based on agreed scientific standards for interoperability towards improving the efficiency of clinical care, producing the indicators required by management, and facilitating patient mobility.
- Health Information and associated technologies have a high degree of complexity. In order to navigate the policy, legislative and regulatory terrain efficiently, the National Department of Health (NDoH) implemented the integrated PHC eHealth Programme in the 10 National Health Insurance (NHI) pilot districts. The aim of this reference implementation was to develop and refine the eHealth architecture building blocks and assess the challenges in implementing the interoperability norms and standards.
- The Programme addresses the principles required for South Africa to move to the next eHealth 'maturity level', such as establishing a unique identifier for each patient, and patient-based information systems being installed at all facilities where health care is delivered. All patient-based systems will be linked to a national electronic health record repository, thereby supporting access by all facilities to all records at all other facilities. As such, all routine public health data will be derived from patient data captured electronically at the point of care.
- Several of the foundational eHealth components required by the eHealth Strategy have been implemented. These include the National Health Normative Standards Framework for interoperability in eHealth (HNSF), the National Data Dictionary and the Health Patient Registration System (HPRS).
- The PHC eHealth Programme's reference implementation of the eHealth interoperability norms and standards entailed massive systemic overhaul, and buy-in from the grassroots officials was therefore crucial for its success. Every programme implementation commenced with a provincial-level meeting, and tools and knowledge were handed over to ensure sustainability.
- The introduction of computers and the conversion of paper-based information systems to electronic systems is no small task, and the change management process that is required to make a successful transition, should not be underestimated.

Ensuring capacity at the health facilities is critical, and requires not only sufficient numbers of staff who are adequately trained on the software packages, but also their sensitisation to the change management process required for implementation.

- Among the key factors identified for implementation were technical requirements at each facility: adequate IT infrastructure (hardware and software); data connectivity via a stable connection to the Internet; and provision for electrical spikes and other contingencies.
- As each health facility constitutes a unique context, the assessment and streamlining of the current facility filing systems (record management) will assist with the implementation of the patient-based systems. All stakeholders should be engaged in the visibility activities to ensure ownership and buy-in.
- Implementation of the PHC eHealth programme offers manifold potential benefits to the health system, including more accurate data and shorter timeframes between end-of-reporting periods and availability of data for programme management.
- This integrated implementation of the eHealth Strategy undertaken by the NDoH in the NHI pilot districts has the potential to revolutionise how information is collected and patients are managed.

SOURCE:

Wolmarans M, Solomon W, Tanna G, Chetty M, Dombo M, Venter J, Parsons A. eHealth Programme reference implementation in primary health care facilities. In: Padarath A, King J, English R, editors. South African Health Review 2014/15. Durban: Health Systems Trust; 2015.

URL:

<http://www.hst.org.za/publications/south-african-health-review-201415>

HST welcomes comments on this publication.

Please send input to:

The Editor
Health Systems Trust
34 Essex Terrace, Westville 3630
Tel: +27 (0)31 266 9090
Fax: +27 (0)31 266 9199
Email: editor@hst.org.za