Using Icloud for Health Data Management in Rural Communities: Challenges and Opportunity to Sustainable Health Provision in Congo

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After more than two decades of civil war and violent conflict in Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the countries most affected by political instabilities which have led to the destruction of vital infrastructures including health facilities. Not only health facilities have been destroyed, there is also a limited infrastructure allowing to efficiently manage health data of hundreds of thousands of patients in rural DRC. In fact, many healthcare facilities register daily information of patients once they visit their facilities. While this practice helps to identify patients, health information are not often kept and the physicians find it extremely hard to monitor health improvement of patients. This lack of proper data management has a negative impact on healthcare delivery.

Hence, to improve healthcare service delivery and strengthen healthcare system, this paper presents an innovative project being developed by Lueur D'Espoir, a Non-Governmental Organization, based in the DRC. The project is aligned as an innovative approach that intends to use electronic database, in virtual space such as iCloud, to manage people's health data. This appears to be a low cost, yet very effective approach for physicians in rural areas. In fact, it has been proven that the lack of recorded medical history in many health facilities, especially in rural areas, physicians struggle to assess and monitor health status of patients. This lack of infrastructure is partially due to years of conflicts and also due to limited economic investment put in rural areas in the DRC.

This paper therefore argues that establishing a manageable iCloud health database in rural DRC, will improve considerably healthcare delivery. In addition, the implementation of this innovation will help to restore trust in medical staff and physicians who won't have to speculate on patients' health history any more. While this project presents positive trends toward improving health services, this paper also presents some pertinent logistical, systemic and structural challenges which will have to be overcome. Upon successful implementation of this project at a small scale, this project will present a huge possibility of scaling this innovation across the country and region.