Tech ticks the boxes for improved primary healthcare

Technology has real potential to effectively deliver primary healthcare across South Africa, and should be used as a road map to better healthcare services for all in the country, according to a [study](#).

Shivani Ranchod, CEO, Percept

"We looked at practical examples from across Africa and researched how other countries used technology in their specific environments. Our work shows that a lot can be achieved despite existing problems such as poor technological literacy, poor uptake of smartphone capabilities, or poor power supply," says Shivani Ranchod, CEO of Percept, which conducted the study.

While Covid-19-linked recessions have highlighted the need for healthcare models that deliver primary healthcare in more cost-effective ways, the lockdowns have also created vast opportunities for the rapid growth and evolution of tech-enabled healthcare delivery models due to the need for virtual care, she adds.

"In time, technological solutions will increasingly ensure that healthcare systems run more efficiently and effectively, but because they focus on specific points of the patient journey, or specific parts of the system, their ability to ensure overall continuity of care and continued engagement with the primary healthcare system will require ongoing attention.

"Innovations such as the ones highlighted in our research could provide solutions across multiple settings, while a more connected health space would offer tangible economic benefits. To unlock these benefits, it is however necessary to

address tech-related challenges, and also relook at restrictive legislation and policies, as this will ease the implementation of virtual health services," she says.

The research looked at a range of innovations that were rolled out in countries like Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Mozambique, focusingon each application's value proposition, uptake and potential scalability, as well as the factors that promoted or undercut its success.

Clear themes

"Enabling factors that consistently contribute to innovations fulfilling the goal to expand access to primary healthcare included partnering with governments; sustainable sources of funding; consumer trust; and keeping tools simple while adapting them to meet specific technological and logistical challenges."

At the same time, there are constraints prevalent throughout the region which require tech-enabled innovations to fine-tune their offering to accommodate local contexts.

"This includes limited network coverage, limited or costly mobile data, poor connectivity, limited access to electricity, smartphone illiteracy, low levels of literacy and education, a diverse range of languages and limited funding," says Ranchod.

"The success of tech-enabled innovations in the region largely depends on sustainability and scalability, building trust and transparency, and keeping the applications simple and seamless and, in particular, enabling integration with public health sector systems.

"By looking at these examples, we believe the South African and other African governments could go a long way to delivering the primary healthcare our nations deserves, despite the technology and resource challenges we face."

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com