

Healthcare improvements rapidly embracing new IT in Africa

For Africa to achieve its great potential, improving health must be a top priority. Healthcare systems face daunting challenges and public health services are hindered by inadequate budgets, under-investment in physical infrastructure, and insufficient numbers of trained healthcare providers.



Arab Health 2011 that took place in Dubai. Africa Health is the newly-launched sister event.

An area that is increasingly playing an important role in quality improvement in healthcare across the globe is Information Technology (IT). In line with this trend, the role of IT in the African Healthcare sector is becoming more prevalent and there are numerous opportunities appearing on the African continent as the healthcare sector rapidly embraces new technology.

To find out first-hand what these developments and opportunities are, medical and healthcare professionals, distributors, suppliers, manufacturers, key decision and policy makers are invited to attend the inaugural Africa Health Exhibition and Congress. A range of highly informative conferences will take place alongside the event and will also cover the role of ICT and e-health in Africa. Specifically - The International Quality and Accreditation in Healthcare Conference running from 10-11 May 2011 - will feature presentations by keynote speakers covering quality management in healthcare, measuring and improving quality, healthcare accreditation and risk management.

This will run alongside nine other CDP accredited comprehensive, multi-track conferences providing a diverse range of topics relating to healthcare in Africa, across the three days of the Exhibition running 9-11 May at the Johannesburg Expo Centre, Nasrec, South Africa.

According to Johann Odendaal, president of South African Health Informatics Association ([SAHIA](#)) and speaker at the Africa Health Congress: "I recently visited Kenya where a hospital was installing a country- wide Information System using 3G technology to connect their central hospital in Nairobi to five on-line remote clinics over networks provided by Safaricom. The system enables clinics and pharmacies to better track their medicine inventories, and thus make sure medicine supplies are more efficiently tracked and dispatched to the clinics that need them the most."

These improved processes lead to optimised patient appointments and throughput, daily billing and stock movements at each clinic in real time, explains Odendaal. Gone are the days of stock-outs and long waiting lists. They can even have an Electronic Patient Record (EPR) that is shared across all facilities and will substantially improve clinical decision making.

"These amazing results prove new technology can leapfrog existing paradigms in Africa," says Odendaal. "Mobile communication and modern web-based solutions have facilitated faster roll-out, a sustainable network and high customer satisfaction, proving a better and more robust solution than conventional technology. While telecoms technology has been deployed in healthcare for a long time now, the evolution of the internet has brought in a major transformation in the way healthcare is delivered, via various applications such as electronic medical records (EMRs), tele-education and tele-consultation."

According to Christinah Leballo, conference scientific chair and senior manager at the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS), to achieve quality at the highest level, a healthcare organisation must participate in quality assurance activities that include defining, designing, assessing, monitoring and improving the healthcare services provided. Quality improvements can be performed as part of the accreditation of facilities, management of health workers, or through the efforts to improve the performance of health workers and the quality of health services.

Africa Health is a sister event to the well-established and successful [Arab Health](#), the second largest healthcare Exhibition and Congress in the world. Organised by [IIR Middle East](#), with growing interest from investors and funding opportunities opening up in the region, Africa Health Exhibition and Congress will attract both regional and international participation and sponsorship.

Entrance to the exhibition is free for trade visitors and registration can be completed on-site during the event as well as online prior to the start. Upon pre-registration, any visitor who refers a colleague (before the 1st of April) stands the chance of winning an exclusive Safari Trip. To register, for further information about the exhibition and for conference rates, go to www.africahealthexhibition.com, e-mail africahealth@iir.co.za or call +27 11 771 7151 / +971 4 3365161.

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