

The Scope of Cell Phones in Diabetes Management in Developing Country Health Care Settings

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Abstract

Diabetes has emerged as a major public health concern in developing nations. Health systems in most developing countries are yet to integrate effective prevention and control programs for diabetes into routine health care services. Given the inadequate human resources and underfunctioning health systems, we need novel and innovative approaches to combat diabetes in developing-country settings. In this regard, the tremendous advances in telecommunication technology, particularly cell phones, can be harnessed to improve diabetes care. Cell phones could serve as a tool for collecting information on surveillance, service delivery, evidence-based care, management, and supply systems pertaining to diabetes from primary care settings in addition to providing health messages as part of diabetes education. As a screening/diagnostic tool for diabetes, cell phones can aid the health workers in undertaking screening and diagnostic and follow-up care for diabetes in the community. Cell phones are also capable of acting as a vehicle for continuing medical education; a decision support system for evidence-based management; and a tool for patient education, self-management, and compliance. However, for widespread use, we need robust evaluations of cell phone applications in existing practices and appropriate interventions in diabetes.

J Diabetes Sci Technol 2011;5(3):778-783

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Abbreviations: (CME) continuing medical education, (EHR) electronic health records, (ID) international dollars, (IT) information technology, (SMS) short messaging service

Keywords: cell phones, decision support system, diabetes, mHealth, wireless

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