



Mobile Phones to Improve Health Outcomes

Mobile phone subscriptions now top six billion, with 76 percent of users living in the developing world. With the rapid growth of mobile phones in developing countries, there is an unprecedented opportunity to support health care providers and share lifesaving health information with isolated populations. Health projects can incorporate mobile phones in a range of promising applications: to deliver behavior change messages that improve awareness and reinforce healthy behaviors, to support health providers with portable tools, and to strengthen an organization’s management and systems. The SHOPS project has been a leader in designing and evaluating mobile applications to improve health.

Examples of SHOPS work

Exploring models for sustaining mhealth services.

The MAMA Bangladesh initiative, a global partnership between USAID and Johnson & Johnson, provides audio and text messages to pregnant women and new mothers linked to their delivery date. The initiative launched at a national scale in early 2013. SHOPS provided technical assistance in coalition formation, technology strategy, and the development of a business model, which included corporate sponsorship, text message advertising, and user fees. The project also supported a study of mobile-enabled enterprises designed to serve the poor in Africa, which identified 10 promising practices to provide commercially viable mhealth applications.

Conducting rigorous impact evaluations. In Ghana, SHOPS conducted an impact evaluation of interactive text reminders to improve prescribing practices of drug vendors. Results showed that those who received the messages had more knowledge about the correct diagnosis and treatment for uncomplicated diarrhea, but the messages were not correlated with a change in prescribing behavior. In Kenya, SHOPS is evaluating the impact of a free text-based information service on consumer knowledge and use of family planning.

Designing innovative call services. In India, SHOPS launched a helpline to provide a private, low-cost option for consumers to ask trained counselors questions about family planning. A supplementary service provided follow-up calls to new users of the injectable contraceptive DMPA. The service improved the DMPA continuation rate from 32 to as much as 96 percent.



Robert Waswaga/Kenwill Consultants

Mobiles can help patients remember to take medications through personalized text messages, bridge health care gaps between rural and urban areas by linking remote villages to qualified providers, and prevent stockouts of critical drugs through automated re-order alerts.

Mobile Phones as Health Tools

The rapid growth of mobile technology in developing countries offers an unprecedented opportunity to improve health outcomes through more timely information and stronger linkages among health providers and their clients.

SHOPS Technical Approach

The SHOPS project is focused on increasing the role of the private sector to improve the availability, quality, and coverage of health products and services across multiple health areas. The project provides innovative applications using mobile phones to inform and engage consumers on health issues, educate and support health workers, improve health program efficiency, and enhance the collection of health data to refine interventions. The SHOPS research team conducts rigorous evaluations of mobile interventions to measure impact on health behaviors and outcomes. SHOPS disseminates mhealth best practices globally, helping connect people and share knowledge. Its work with mobile technology includes:

- Brokering partnerships to harness complementary resources of providers, governments, media companies, mobile operators, and technology firms
- Developing cost-effective mobile technology solutions that reflect local needs



G.M.B. Akash/Panos

In Bangladesh and throughout the developing world, mobile phones offer an exceptional opportunity to improve communication and, potentially, health outcomes.

For more information about the SHOPS mhealth program, contact:

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For more information about the SHOPS project, visit: www.shopsproject.org



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