







# Investigating the Impediments to Accessing Reliable, Timely and Integrated Electronic Patient Data in Healthcare Sites in Uganda

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**Abstract:** The purpose of collecting patient data is to support their care and wellbeing. Patient-centred care is attained by securely availing all records about the patient whenever it's necessary to the right persons and at the right time. However, healthcare providers have often failed to share integrated patient data on time due to limitations in accessing reliable patient data required to inform care/treatment decisions. This study aimed to investigate impediments to accessing reliable, timely and integrated patient data through investigating the processes for collection, analysis, and presentation of data across various healthcare sites in Uganda. A cross-sectional study design was followed, and data was collected from purposively selected National level (policymakers) and Sub-national level (health facilities). The field findings indicate various impediments to accessing patient data including but not limited to inadequate mechanisms for electronic health data collection, storage and access, non-standardised health data sharing mechanisms, inadequate Health Information System (HIS) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, and inadequate skills, knowledge and training. Other impediments included; insufficient security and privacy measures, weak eHealth governance, and inadequate management support. Accordingly, these have negatively impacted on patient data use and quality of patient care in Uganda.


## 1 INTRODUCTION


Governments in lower-middle and low-income countries like Uganda have adopted the use of ICT to improve the delivery of services including healthcare to all its citizens. Uganda's eHealth Policy and Strategy documents have identified unique pillars necessary to support the successful adoption of ICT to support healthcare (Ministry of Health, Uganda, 2016). However, reaping the benefits of ICT in healthcare have continued to face a lot of challenges including; lack of specific standards on electronic data collection, storage and sharing, non-interoperable ICT systems and technologies, resistance to using ICT to support healthcare, limited


ICT skills and knowledge as well as weak governance structures ( Ministry of Health, Uganda, 2016; Ross *et al.*, 2016; Sara, 2016).


These ICT challenges often impact the collection, sharing, storage, and use of patient data. Patient data is collected “*to create holistic views of patients, personalize treatments, advance treatment methods, improve communication between doctors and patients, and enhance health outcomes*”(Sakovich, 2019). To have a complete history of a patient, there is a need for all medical records/ data to be availed in an integrated and reliable manner. However, healthcare providers have often failed to access patient data on time, even though patient-centred care requires that all data about a patient is made available


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