

Medical Call Centre and Mobile Health Platforms for Advancing HIV Prevention and Treatment Efforts by Promoting Male Inclusion in Uganda

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Issues: Mobile phone ownership is becoming ubiquitous as the cost of acquiring devices and telecommunication connectivity is reducing steadily across Africa.

Uganda's mobile phone users have grown from 1 million to 22 million between 2013 and 2016.

Public health programs are increasingly leveraging mobile phone platforms for health information dissemination and patient engagement.

Our team sought to explore the value of mobile health in reaching previously hard-to-reach Men with HIV prevention and treatment information.

Descriptions: The Medical Concierge Group Limited (TMCG) operates a medical call centre that provides 24/7 access to doctors and pharmacists for medical consultations. Access is through voice calls, a two-way SMS platform, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. TMCG disseminates health information and responds to questions on general HIV prevention and treatment options including Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). This is done in real-time and is accessible throughout the country.

Lessons learned: TMCG presently has 50,000 monthly users of the teleconsultation platform for various health issues.

80% of these are youths below 35 years with a male to female ratio of 70:30.

WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular platforms with most queries on condom use, emergency contraception, HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) as well as male circumcision services.

The high utilisation of mobile health platforms among men is not only due to higher mobile phone ownership but also attributed to the confidentiality and privacy they provide. Most men adapt better to mobile health platforms for consulting on HIV prevention and treatment rather than through physical interactions.

Next steps: The growth of mobile phone use has effectively opened up new channels for health communication that promotes inclusion of previously hard-to-reach populations. With much fewer men attending physical health facilities than women,

mobile health platforms and call centres provide an avenue for reaching them and linking them into HIV care.