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m-Health remote care initiatives for the ageing population in developing countries

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Issue: By 2020 there will be over a billion elderly people on the planet with 700 million of these in the developing world. Despite the fact that a large ageing population is challenged by chronic illnesses, improper medication use and limited access to healthcare and information, the importance of Elderly care has failed to penetrate properly into the existing healthcare policy in many developing countries. m-Health remote care initiatives for the elderly through condition management, post hospital care, and assisted living could enable improvements in healthcare, quality of life, continuum of care and avoid age-related discrimination and stigma.

Description: A m-Health approach usually follows Store and Forward (SAF) or Real-Time-Consultation (RTC) technique. However, for cost–effectiveness and greater patient satisfaction a hybrid technology using SAF and RTC by audio-communication would be preferable. In this 2-3 steps communication, elder patients with the help of caregivers will send pre-loaded standardized templates containing disease information, queries and applicable images to the coordinating doctors using mobile phone technologies. After personal evaluation or consulting with the relevant specialists, the coordinating doctors will send a feed back. Although modifications can be adopted depending on existing disease pattern, types of intervention, ICT infrastructure, funding, etc, but this will be the basis for an m-health approach.

Conclusion: By understanding the concept, application, potentials and lessons from previous experiences, we have to move forward with intuitive m–Health remote care initiatives for the elderly-which could be the effective solutions for the developing countries.

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