

Implementing e-health in Malawi

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In low-income countries a substantial challenge in planning and delivering healthcare is the accurate assessment of disease burden. In this week's *PLOS Medicine*, Miguel SanJoaquin from the University of Malawi College of Medicine and colleagues describe their experience of implementing an electronic patient record system in a large referral hospital in southern Malawi.

The system, known as Surveillance Programme of IN-patients and Epidemiology (SPINE), is used to record patient details during consultations and this data can be used to monitor changing patterns of disease at the hospital.

The authors note, "[o]ne of the main obstacles in monitoring of the success of international public health targets, including the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs), has been the lack of accurate monitoring and evaluation of disease burdens. Reliable and comparable information about the main causes of disease in populations and how these causes are changing, is a crucial input for debates about priorities in the health sector."

More information: SanJoaquin MA, Allain TJ, Molyneux ME, Benjamin L, Everett DB, et al. (2013) Surveillance Programme of IN-patients and Epidemiology (SPINE): Implementation of an Electronic Data Collection Tool within a Large Hospital in Malawi. *PLoS Med* 10(3): e1001400. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001400](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001400)

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