

Healthcare corruption taken to task by technology, study shows

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Mobile phone technology could help to beat bad practices in healthcare delivery, research suggests.

Innovations such as apps offer opportunities for improving governance in the [healthcare sector](#), particularly in low and [middle income countries](#), the study found.

Experts say that good governance is essential for ensuring citizens have fair access to high quality healthcare.

Corruption, fraud, inefficiency and discrimination are major barriers to medical care provision in many developing countries.

Researchers from the Universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge reviewed existing studies on how mobiles, the internet and other [digital technologies](#) are being used to tackle questionable practices in healthcare.

They identified a number of initiatives that are helping to increase transparency and accountability in [healthcare services](#).

Examples include enabling people to report discrimination or bribery through social media. Barcodes that can be read by mobile devices are helping people to check that their medicines are genuine.

Other initiatives such as automated monitoring of hospital stocks are

helping to prevent theft. Mobile phone payment systems can offer additional security to ensure [healthcare workers](#) receive their salaries directly.

This is the first comprehensive review of how digital technologies are helping to tackle corruption in healthcare.

Senior researcher Dr Claudia Pagliari, of the University of Edinburgh's Global Health Academy and Usher Institute of Population Health and Informatics, said: "While all countries are affected by these problems to some extent, the health sector in low and middle-income regions has been particularly susceptible. As digital technologies become more widely available there are real opportunities to make a difference, and we've seen some great examples of innovation. Further research is needed to understand which approaches are likely to work best and why."

Isaac Holeman, a Gates Scholar pursuing PhD studies at the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School, and co-founder of the non-profit MedicMobile, adds: "To be effective these technologies need to be designed with a sound understanding of the lived experiences of users and accompanied by the right mechanisms for turning digital insights into action."

The study, published in the *Journal of Global Health*, was funded by the US Agency for International Development through its Leadership, Management and Government Project.

More information: *Journal of Global Health*, [DOI: 10.7189/jogh.06.020408](#)

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