Mobile Health Geographies: A Case from Zimbabwe

Liberty Makacha & Prestige Tatenda Makanga

Abstract

Mobile health (mHealth) commonly intersects mobile technology and healthcare practices. Geographically enabled mobile health is an evolving subset of mHealth practices that accounts for how geography mediates health outcomes. The domain of both mHealth and geo-enabled mHealth is varied in both scope and interpretation. This chapter explores some of the varied interpretations of mHealth and geographically enabled mobile health. Emerging trends and trajectories in geographically enabled mHealth as well as barriers to implementation of geo-enabled mobile health practices in Africa are also discussed. These are explored through two cases: Mapping Outcomes for Mothers (MOM) and RoadMApp, both aimed at improving maternal health outcomes in low resourced settings. At the time of writing this chapter, both mHealth applications were at the prototype phase with plans for testing them in Zimbabwe, Kenya, the Gambia, and Mozambique. The chapter concludes by discussing how these and similar emerging technologies possess incredible potential for targeting health interventions. However, the acceptability, clinical utility and access to geo-enabled mHealth tools are yet to have demonstrable impact on health policy, especially in Africa.