

Technology leads the race to affordable healthcare

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

1 Jul 2016

We all know healthcare costs an arm and a leg, and in South Africa if you can afford it, you are basically held to ransom by medical aid companies and private healthcare pricing. If you can't, then you face the hell of the inefficiencies and long queues at state hospitals.



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And although the minister of health preaches universal cover and a national health insurance, it is seriously a long way off, given that there is not even suggestions on how it will be financed yet.

Mobile innovations

So, for now, it's going to be clever thinking that brings the cost of healthcare down. That great disruptor, technology, is making just as big an impact on healthcare as it is on other sectors and, as in the banking industry, mobile is set to be the enabler.

Already there are a number of apps designed aimed at addressing challenges such as medicine delivery and diagnosis in remote areas of the continent.

Remote diagnostic tools

According to an [article](#) on AfricaMentor.com, some Kenyan doctors came up with Teleradiology, a technology that “erases the boundaries between image acquisition, reporting and referring doctors. It speeds up the process of getting the images before the knowledgeable eyes of licensed radiologists” for a proper diagnosis.

Then there's MedAfrica, which is a virtual library of medical information available on a smart phone for validating a doctors credentials, locating a specialist, and finding possible diagnoses for symptoms.

While a Cameroonian entrepreneur developed the Cardiopad, a computer tablet that performs heart examinations like ECGs. It utilises electrodes, fitted with bluetooth, that are placed on the patient's chest sending a signal to the touch screen tablet that can then wirelessly transfers the readings to one of the few cardiologists who is normally located in the capital city.

Getting back to health insurance, Zandre Campos, CEO of Angola Capital, Investments wrote in the [Huffington Post](#) that Africa needs affordable pre-paid private health insurance.

Kenyan model

He said that Kenya launched a successful private programme that provides basic quality medical care at low cost.

"Costs are lessened by keeping medical tests to a minimum and using doctors' time efficiently, with nurses performing tasks doctors don't need to do. The Kenyan programme costs about \$11 a person, compared to \$30 - \$40 per patient the WHO estimates for a basic medical system."

"One of our healthcare portfolio companies, Sphera Bluoshen, has developed an innovative solution called M Health that is being implemented in Russia and elsewhere, and will be soon be tested in Africa. The technology allows mobile consultation 24/7 for paediatric and general medicine through its mobile app. We've found that it provides easier access to healthcare, with better quality, increased efficiency and reduced costs."

"Patients can communicate easily with their doctors, receive medical information to which they never before had access, and essentially control their own health.," he concluded.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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