



EDT Simplifies the Management of Pharmacy Appointments for Patients on Antiretroviral Therapy

Efficiently managing pharmacy appointments for large numbers of patients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) at public health facilities is challenging without a simple, computerized tool, such as the electronic dispensing tool (EDT).

At public health facilities in Namibia, pharmacy staff and nurses use the EDT to manage the register of patients on ART, track which antiretrovirals (ARVs) are dispensed, and schedule and monitor appointments for each patient to visit the pharmacy and replenish their prescribed medications. The tool has improved the pharmaceutical and clinical management of patients and facilitates the timely generation of district- and national-level ART data for evidence-based decision making.

It is important that pharmacy and nursing staff are trained and receive ongoing technical support to use this tool effectively. Toward this end, the US Agency for International Development-funded Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Project provides EDT training and onsite technical support to all 51 main ART sites in the 14 regions of Namibia.

Mr. Paavo Heita, a pharmacist assistant working at the Outapi District Hospital in the Omusati region, says the Mobile EDT (mEDT) has been useful, particularly during ART outreach visits. Heita's health team serves between 60 and 100 patients per day on outreach visits that take an average of two minutes per patient when using the mEDT.

If a manual dispensing system were used, it would take staff much longer to serve a patient, resulting in long queues. With long waits, patients become dissatisfied with the services being provided and may not return for medication refills.

Heita graduated from the Ministry of Health and Social Services' National Health Training Centre and has been using the mEDT since he completed his training in 2013. He finds it to be much faster than the manual process.

"The mobile EDT helps us a lot when we go to our outreach sites. We can see up to 60 patients on ART per day and we simply upload the data to the main EDT when we return to our station. It also makes it easier for us to manage our appointments with patients and to compile our monthly reports as all the data is available at a click of a button." — Paavo Heita, Outapi District Hospital

The data in the mEDT are highly secured using passwords and encryption. Upon returning from the field, staff export data into the main EDT at the health center or hospital, a process that takes a few minutes. The shorter dispensing time and availability of patient information enables health workers to provide other clinical services to the patient and improves overall patient management.



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The speed and efficiency resulting from the use of the mEDT has benefited ART patients who no longer have to wait for hours to receive their medication. Mr. Vincent Sitali receives his ARV medication from the Bukalo Health Centre in the Zambezi Region and shared his experience with the new system:

“The whole process now takes less than an hour. Now I don’t need to get up very early in the morning to travel from my village which is 40km from here. We are spending a very short time at the clinic.”

According to the 2013 Namibia Demographic Health Survey, the Zambezi and Omusati regions have the highest burden of HIV in the country, with prevalence rates of 23.7% and 17.4 %, respectively. These are higher than the national average of 13.1%.

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Paavo Heita, a Pharmacy Assistant at the Outapi District Hospital in the Omusati region of Namibia, uses the Mobile EDT to dispense ARVs to patients.

Photo credit: SIAPS Namibia. February 12, 2016