



Letter to the Editor

Contribution of Health Records Officers' Registration Board of Nigeria in the development of Guideline for the Electronic Health Records (EHRs): A product of eHealth

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Dear Editor,

The World Health Assembly in 2005 recognized the widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the health sector. It however observed that there is no or little coordination and thus, passed resolution 58.28 on the adoption of eHealth. With this, member states were urged to draw up long-term strategic plans for the development and implementation of digital health services to strengthen their health system.

Similarly, in 2010, the WHO regional committee meeting for Africa further urged member states to strengthen their health system through the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for digital health governance, regulation, human resources development, standards and interoperability, infrastructure, and appropriate services and applications.

This has made Nigeria prioritize the use of technology such as Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and Electronic Health Records (EHR) in fast-tracking the attainment of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which is the principal goal of Nigeria's Health policy. Consequently, the government of Nigeria developed and implemented policies and programs aimed at strengthening the National Health System. The

initial focus was on innovations including the use of ICT to improve service delivery, access, and coverage.

In 2015, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) and Federal Ministry of Communication Technology (FMCT) led the multi-sectoral and stakeholders (HRORBN inclusive) leveraged on the enabling environment components of the World Health Organization-International Telecommunications Union eHealth Strategy Toolkit for the development of the National Health Information and Communication Technology Strategic framework 2015-2020, which was reviewed last in 2022.

The Strategic document was borne out of the recognition of the opportunities that ICT presents in supporting EMR and EHR. Despite these opportunities, the inadequate policy and regulatory environment for eHealth/EHR has been identified as an impediment to the encouragement and sustenance of innovation (like EMR) and the use of existing and emerging eHealth products. Interoperability among the hospitals using EMR has been a great challenge as the products used were sub-standard.

Consequently, the Multi-sectoral and Stakeholders Committee created a sub-committee

known as National Mirror Committee/Technical Committee (NMC/TC) on adoption of selected International Standards (ISO/TC 215-Health Informatics, which HRORBN was an active member and co-sponsor of the processes alongside other relevant stakeholders like Standard Organizations of Nigeria (SON), FMOH, FMCT, NITDA and all regulatory bodies. Thirty-two (32) standards were adapted and adopted by the committee, with fifteen (15) related to EMR/EHR.

These EMR/EHR-related standards were used in the development of guidelines for the development of EMR/EHR in Nigeria. The guidelines/document are readily available to safeguard the development of EMR and EHR for effective and efficient healthcare delivery. The document would ensure the interoperability of health information across the regions

In conclusion, the HRORBN still has a role to play in creating more awareness of the guidelines and updating it regularly as there is emerging innovation worthy of embracing.

Thank you.