



## **An Assessment of the Records Keeping Status in Some Selected Health Institutions of Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe**

Rodreck David \*, Adock Dube

National University of Science and Technology

**Background and Purpose:** Records keeping is important for a functional health delivery system in the management of important information. It forms the indispensable informational and logical link between the different levels of health care both in terms of the referral of patients, supervision, outreach services, the supply of health commodities and disease management. It is an important component of the health care delivery system. The purpose of the study was to find out the range and types of records kept by the health centres, clinics and hospitals; to find out if there are electronic records keeping systems used by the health institutions; to determine the records management and records keeping systems used by the health centres, clinics and hospitals and comparing them to internationally recommended standards; to find out the skills and experience of staff who manage records at different levels; and to suggest ways of improving records management systems in the health institutions province.

**Methods:** The quantitative research approach was used through a descriptive exploratory survey used to gather data from a sampled population from health facilities in Matabeleland South boarder line area covering four districts in Zimbabwe.

**Results:** The insufficiencies in health delivery and disease management can be partly attributed to poor records management practices in health institutions due to lack of training of nurses, poorly maintained infrastructure and a multiplicity of other factors discussed in this paper.

**Conclusions:** If promoted, Records Keeping Systems (RKSs)\* which often generate several information-based solutions can be used to complement and partially fill the gaps left by the endeavours of medical and research-based solutions in improving health systems service delivery and disease management in remote, rural communities.

### **\*Notes:**

A "Records Keeping System" is a manual or automated system that collects, organizes, and categorizes records, facilitating their preservation, retrieval, use, and disposition. Elements of a records keeping system are:

- Records - information resources, in any format, that are:
  - created in the course of business,
  - received for action, or
  - needed to document institutional activities.
- People - the records management personnel such as records clerks, classification specialists, and information officers
- Processes - procedures on how to manage records throughout their lifecycle or continuum which are stipulated in standing orders, procedure manuals and policies as well as programmed software.
- Tools - equipment and software used to capture, organise, store, track, transmit/communicate and retrieve the records.

**Keywords:** Records Keeping Systems (RKSs), Health Care Delivery Systems, Health Records Management, Marginal communities

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