How health platforms can improve healthcare in the Global South

Digital health platforms can improve healthcare in the Global South, but they must factor in local culture and knowledge in their design.

EFFECTIVE CLINICAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

A neglected local context

MedicineAfrica, a crowdsourced digital platform, was developed to help improve and personalize the healthcare services they need. The platform aims to provide up-to-date clinical knowledge and offer opportunities for upskilling healthcare professionals, equipping medical students with up-to-date clinical knowledge and, ultimately, improving healthcare outcomes.

However, this knowledge did not come without problems. Our findings indicate that the global South end up displacing and suppressing local knowledge and curricula and best practices of Western societies while aiming to meet the Global North end up displacing and suppressing local knowledge and curricula and best practices of Western societies while aiming to meet the

Digital epistemic colonialism

Knowledge transfer through digital health platforms can have unintended consequences, including digital epistemic colonialism, which platform designers and managers could prevent by being more mindful of local

A neglected local context

As a participant told us, "We, in Africa, sometimes use what we have. We adapt what we have. We can't choose. We have to use what we have. We can't change that."

Specifically, participants described that some of the knowledge they would be exposed to on MedicineAfrica would be "unavailable equipment and medicines." As a participant told us, "We, in Africa, sometimes use what we have. We adapt what we have. We can't choose. We have to use what we have. We can't change that."

In their daily work, clinicians would make do with whatever equipment is available. They would tell me, "This is the equipment we have. We have to use whatever we have. We can't change that."

Also, participants highlighted the significance of participating in a platform with clinicians from other countries who were actively using the platform. They said, "It's been very useful to see how other clinicians are using the platform. It's been helpful to see how they are using the platform."

Digital epistemic colonialism

Finally, platforms based in the Global North often overlook the specific colonial context of healthcare delivery in the Global South. As a participant told us, "We, in Africa, sometimes use what we have. We adapt what we have. We can't choose. We have to use what we have. We can't change that."

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