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MHealth in Pediatric Oncology Care. Development of Mobile Support for Family Members of Children with Cancer in Ethiopia

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TREO

Technology, Research, Education, Opinion

MHealth in Pediatric Oncology Care

Development of Mobile Support for Family Members of Children with Cancer in Ethiopia

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Cancer is a major burden in Ethiopia. The Oncology Department of Black Lion Specialized Hospital in Addis Ababa is the country's sole specialist unit for cancer care. With a handful of oncologists, lack of resources, and a huge patient load, the work is extremely challenging. Patients, usually accompanied by family members, often wait for a long time and frequently depart without getting information or treatment (Kebede et al., 2020). Family members of children with cancer are especially vulnerable, experiencing a lack of information, support, and stigmatization, resulting in distress, depression, and anxiety (Deribe et al., 2021).

In Africa, the use of mobile phones is rapidly increasing, turning mHealth applications into an accessible tool for providing opportunities to overcome disparities in access to health services and health information (Nyende, 2020). In our planned project, we aim at developing a pediatric cancer information app targeted at family members in Ethiopia. First, we will assess the information needs by interviewing parents/caregivers of children diagnosed with the most common cancer types, represented in the country. We will also interview oncologists and nurses. Next, based on the analysis of interviews, we will develop a prototype in collaboration with the staff from Black Lion Hospital, Sahlgrenska University, and RISE Institute. The prototype will be tested by family members and staff in different parts of Ethiopia. Finally, we will evaluate the test results and develop the final version of the application.

The outcomes of this study will help to increase access to information about pediatric cancer, contributing to decreasing psychological problems and improving quality of life for families with children with cancer. As the number of oncology centers and health providers in Ethiopia is limited, the project will also contribute to minimizing the burden for health care providers.

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