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Digital Health in the Middle East and North Africa

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MENAHIA (Middle East and North African Health Informatics Association) is the International Medical Informatics Association chapter dedicated to the Middle East and North Africa region. MENA countries are diverse in terms of economic development and culture, which automatically reflects itself on the health systems development in these countries. This region is rapidly growing in terms of the use of health informatics or what has been recently coined "digital health". "One Health" is a new concept in these countries as human health is highly affected by the social determinants of health, health of the environment, animal's health, food, nutrition, climate change, and many other factors that are beyond the biological or genetic structure of human beings. The impact of animal health and the health of the environment on people's health is an old phenomenon but recent reemerging and appearance of diseases have clearly demonstrated the link between these. The Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that almost all of us have been suffering from is an example of this.

Several countries in MENA region have already shown the depth and the work that they do to integrate the concept of 'One Health' in the public health surveillance system as demonstrated by the different databases they keep. Most of these databases ae disintegrated and do not communicate with each other directly. Interoperability, integration, and working under the "One-Health" using information and communication technologies for health is one solution that needs to be pursued. Others include the governance, orientation of policymakers and training of health systems operators. The examples that were provided to monitor the health of animals, agriculture, environmental health, climate change, and man-made and natural disasters are just examples of what countries have been registering in their databases and informing the health authorities of these changes and emerging trends.

Biography

Najeeb Al-Shorbaji has been working as a volunteer and consultant in eHealth (digital health), knowledge management and medical librarianship since March 2017. Worked as Director of Knowledge, Ethics and Research Department at the World Health Organization (WHO/HQ) between 2008 and 2015. Between February 1988 and August 2008 he worked as Coordinator for Knowledge Management and Sharing, Regional Advisor for Health and Information and Telecommunication and Information Scientist at the WHO Regional Office in Amman, Alexandria and Cairo. He holds a PhD in Information Science since 1986. Has published over 215 research papers, book chapters and presentations and attended, presented at, and delivered keynote addresses in over 175 professional conferences and seminars..