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BIRD FLU AIDS

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Mobiles to track bird flu and Aids spread

Rwanda tests out mobile health system

By Jo Best

Published: Wednesday 18 October 2006

Doctors tracking the spread of HIV and bird flu have a new tool to help in the fight against such deadly diseases - the humble mobile phone.

Medics in Rwanda have trialled a new application that lets medical and government staff report data - disease outbreaks, drug inventory levels, patient treatment status - back to a central database using a mobile.

In Rwanda, the system, created by the GSM Association and vendor Voxiva, is used to keep tabs on the health infrastructure and has replaced the old paper and pen input. As well as sending information, doctors will be able to order medicine using their handsets.

All requests and data are sent over Rwanda's mobile network on GPRS where available. In areas with no GPRS coverage the system will drop back to sending data over SMS.

Now it's hoped the system will be deployed across the whole of Rwanda as well as other African countries including Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania.

Indonesia has already signed up to test the Java app from next month, which is aiming to tackle potential bird flu pandemics.

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