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For Further Global Diffusion of eHealth: Application of Japanese Experience to the Pacific

Masatsugu Tsuji^a and Yuji Akematsu^b
^aGraduate School of Applied Informatics, University of Hyogo, 1-3-3 Higashikawasaki-cho, Kobe Harbor Land Building 22F, Chuou-ku, 650-0044 Kobe, Japan
^bGraduate School of Applied Informatics, University of Hyogo, Higashikawasaki-cho, Kobe Harbor Land Building 22F, Chuou-ku, 650-0044 Kobe, Japan

Approximately one hundred Japanese local governments are already implementing eHealth systems, utilizing totally 11,000 devices. The eHealth system transmits health-related data of its users such as blood pressure, ECG, and blood oxygen to a remote medical institution via telecommunications networks. Although this is a simple system, we analyzed that it actually reduced medical expenditures of life-style related illness such as diabetes, strokes, high blood pressure, and cerebral infarction. In other words, we proved that eHealth does not cure diseases but it prevents illness. How does eHealth make this possible? From our field research, it has the following effects to users: (1) less anxiety in day-to-day life, (2) stabilization of illness, and (3) enhancement of health consciousness. In addition to the above effects, eHealth saves medical staffs and medical facilities by making use of ICT (Information Communications Technology) and provides the same health services to people live in mountainous areas and isolated islands. Japanese local governments which utilize eHealth are located in such areas. The factor which makes handicapped regions to provide services lies in the financial scheme, which is referred to as "Public Policy Model". Existing systems are mainly supported financially by subsidies from the central government. These are exactly public policy of implementation. For the further development of this system, stronger financial basis should be introduced. This paper suggests reimbursement to the system from medical insurance. Regarding the Pacific Region, Japanese public policy model can be interpreted in the global framework. In this analysis, we propose "Universal Service Fund of eHealth," in which developed countries contribute funds to developing countries at the certain amounts. This financial scheme and an international organization which support the operation of the eHealth system will be able to provide the same quality of health services to people in the Pacific.

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