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Ministry signs contract to implement electronic health records system

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shortly after they signed the contract during a ceremony at the hospital. Looking on are Tariq Alli (left), general manager, Caribbean Country Department/representative, Jamaica Country Office, Inter-American Development Bank, and Orett Clarke (right), programme manager of the Health Systems Strengthening Programme (HSSP).

Minister of Health and Wellness Dr Christopher Tufton says Jamaica has become a regional leader in the provision of modern healthcare with the planned implementation of an electronic health records system to serve 13 health facilities across the island in the first phase.

“(Jamaica) is the only country within the Caribbean to move into the modern era of this nature,” Tufton said, “It is clear that our greatest assets, our staff, can now serve patients more efficiently.”

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He was speaking at the official contract signing ceremony hosted by the health ministry at the Spanish Town General Hospital in St. Catherine on Tuesday, February 28.

“Today, as we usher in the electronic health records system, we mark an important milestone on the road to delivering equitable, comprehensive and quality health care for the people of Jamaica, and to making reliable and modern infrastructure available for health service delivery,” Minister Tufton said.

The EHR system is being implemented as part of the Health Systems Strengthening Programme, for which Jamaica has received a loan of US\$50 million from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

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It includes a patient registration system for appointment setting and assignment of patients in the triage process of a facility, which will mean shorter wait times for diagnosis and treatment, reduced cost in providing services, increased productivity, reduced staff frustration, and increased service-satisfaction levels.

EHR will allow healthcare providers access to review a patient's full medical history via a database, whether at a health centre or hospital, enabling health professionals, in a controlled environment, to access patients' medical history and to be able to deliver faster responses.

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“This is a programme which will be fully developed over 18 months, so (it is) at Spanish Town now, but over time the programme will serve all public health facilities in three parishes,” Tufton said. He said the addition of the system will no doubt add to the efficiency of record keeping at the 220-bed hospital.

“When you have plans to fully develop the health sector, there has to be a place for technology. The addition of computer-based activities can only work to advance the projected direction of ... accountability and workers’ efficiency,” Tufton said. The Spanish Town Hospital, built in 1952, is the largest type B facility in Jamaica.

The system will operate as a seamless ‘one-patient, one-record’ process, and will have patients’ records at the literal touch of a button.

The health ministry’s Website notes that the UK firm, The Phoenix Partnership (TPP), has been contracted to deliver the system. TPP, with its 26 years of institutional experience, it notes, is the leading global provider of healthcare technology, with a reputation of working alongside governments to improve health outcomes and tackle inequalities in care. Their contractual obligations to Jamaica also include a 15-year support period, along with additional functionality, such as a patient-centric mobile app.

Clinical director of Phoenix Partnership United Kingdom, Dr John Parry, said the system was launched over 20 years ago (1998) and so far has 50 million patients on record.

“The data on these patients will be available at the health centres or the hospital. It helps with real-time delivery of patients’ records, which follows them in a confidential way throughout ”

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