Embracing Telehealth in Uganda: Opportunities and Challenges

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Telehealth is the use of digital information and communication technologies to access healthcare services and manage one’s health care remotely. Various devices used for this include: smart phones, laptops, tablets, smart watches and others.\(^1\) In Uganda various startups such as Rocket Health are providing telehealth services. Over 40,000 people are using the services and the users are increasing by the day.\(^2\)

Telehealth is beneficial because it makes it easier for people in various places to access health services. During the COVID-19 pandemic telehealth helped to reduce infections. It also helped to reduce the burden on the health systems which had more patients than they could handle.

However, there are challenges such as access issues due to lack of devices or internet. There is also a high cost of the internet. Not all diseases can be treated remotely and this is a limitation to telehealth. There are concerns about data privacy and protection arising from the sensitive information that patients submit online. There are concerns as to whether insurance firms extend their coverage to telehealth services which often increases the out of pocket payments for patients.\(^3\)

This paper will give a clear picture on the status of telehealth in Uganda. It will address the concerns that arise in the use of telehealth in Uganda. This will include the need for proper regulation of telehealth service provision in Uganda, training for medical personnel and availing the necessary equipment and technology. It will also carry out a comparative analysis between Uganda and Singapore. Singapore is a front runner in the area of telehealth in Asia.\(^4\) This study will then state recommendations for Uganda to achieve effective telehealth services.