

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

THE ROLE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS IN
HEALTH INFORMATICS WITHIN HOSPITALS IN THE BULAWAYO
METROPOLITAN PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

BY

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Abstract

The introduction of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the health sector has brought about health informatics which uses computing, networking and communications technologies to improve health delivery. However, the inclusion of archival concerns at system design in healthcare informatics has not been prioritised, resulting in systems which fail to produce authentic, reliable and records with all features of recordness. Furthermore, the long-term preservation of records and information created by such systems has been a challenge. This study sought to find the level of engagement of Records and Archives Management (RAM) professionals and their concerns in health informatics in hospitals in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe.

Five hospitals, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, Health Information and Disease Surveillance Unit and the National Archives of Zimbabwe participated in this study. A total of 27 out of the targeted 31 research participants were the targeted population of the study. The study was qualitative, applying an interpretivist approach and a qualitative multi case study research design. Face to face interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis were used as data collection methods. Narratives of respondents were presented thematically and the themes were derived from the research objectives of the study.

The findings of the study showed that there was a general lack of concern for the long term preservation of records and information in electronic platforms. Records and archives management personnel were not capacitated to handle e-records and the National Archives of Zimbabwe was not involved in e-records management initiatives. There were no e-records management functional requirements, policies, standards and legislation were also not adequate for health informatics initiatives. Furthermore, training for health informatics and e-records management was inadequate.

The study, therefore, recommended that e-records management and health informatics legislation, policies and standards be established. The study also recommended that records and archives management professionals be involved in health informatics initiatives at system design stage. The study also recommended that health information and health informatics degree programmes be established by tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe.