Poor Countries Use Cell Phones to Boost Health Care

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A new initiative will use mobile and computer technology to improve health care in developing countries, Voice of America News reports.

The Rockefeller, Vodafone and United Nations Foundations are joining forces to form the Mobile Health Alliance or mHealth for short. These prominent foundations want to harness the benefits of mobile technology in both social and economic terms.

Claire Thwaites, head of the United Nations and Vodafone Technology Partnership, describes mobile technology—especially cell phones—as pervasive. “We’re seeing penetration reach 2.2 billion customers in emerging markets. We look at the level of PC (personal computers) penetration, that’s at 305 million PCs in the developing world,” said Thwaites.

According to Thwaites, the technology has many health applications. “You might be looking at text messaging to improve population awareness about malaria prevention or how to prevent HIV/AIDS,” Thwaites said. “Then you get to more sophisticated uses of mobile to support consultation and remote diagnosis, as well as being able to communicate with health workers.”

The Mobile Health Alliance is expected to host a large conference this year, inviting both the private and public sector to join the effort.

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