



PHOTO & CAPTION

Saving lives with information



Photo: Bassam Al Mohor/Chemonics International

“The health information system helped save the lives of many people.”

Yunis Abu Munshar
Government doctor

Telling Our Story

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A critically ill patient arrives at a hospital. Doctors have only minutes to reach a diagnosis and start treatment. But the doctors don't have access to the patient's records and are missing vital information. What if the patient is allergic to medication or has an unknown medical condition?

Doctors at Palestinian government hospitals used to face this challenge every day. Patient records might be at a different hospital, stored in a closed archive, or lost. “It used to take a lot of time to access information,” said Dr. Yunis Abu Munshar, a government hospital doctor in the southern West Bank. “We would ask patients' families about their medical details.”

Now, Dr. Abu Munshar can get the information he needs, at the click of a button, through the Ministry of Health's national data management system.

Since 2010, the ministry has linked 14 hospitals and clinics to its cutting edge system, supported by USAID.

By 2014, 74% of Palestinians living in the West Bank will have access to medical services at government facilities using the automated system.

Before records were digitized, hospitals were dependent on archives of paper files, which were locked after normal working hours. “It was very difficult to get patient records, especially during holidays, weekends, or evening shifts,” said Abu Munshar.

Clinicians at any connected facility can now immediately retrieve a medical record by entering the patient's details. “With the system, we have access, all day long, anytime,” he explained. “Nowadays, all we need is the patient's identity number or name and we can see all his past medical history.”

Better information results in better health care. “All this enables me as a doctor to help the patient faster, to treat faster, and to think faster,” Abu Munshar said.

“The health information system has helped to save the lives of many people,” said Abu Munshar.