



**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**TOWHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**Re: Physicians Recommendation of VODAN**

We the Physicians associated with VODAN Africa are very pleased with the extensive work of VODAN. From our standpoint we see many benefits from our association with VODAN. The collaboration has built a platform for connecting health facilities across each other and one another, by obtaining complete integrated data of high quality. This means doctors treating patients visiting any VODAN related health facility can enjoy e-health data interoperability, covering patient medical history, clinical data, laboratory data and radiological data.

VODAN establishes data sharing platforms and other clinical needs across Africa. This support will improve pathology data quality, collection, rapid fixation and biobanking. The exchange will also improve clinicopathology data linkages, incorporate multi-omics or imaging data using data aggregation and harmonization tools to facilitate interoperability, sharing, and discovery for specific preventable diseases like cancer, malaria, cholera and the current one, covid19. VODAN has made it possible for physicians to collaborate with partner tech companies and other consortium members in VODAN Africa.

We have seen that the training of data stewards in our health facilities enhances better data collection, storage and supporting medical decisions, which in the past doctors were not privy to. The Data infrastructure demonstrated by VODAN will make it easier to access and offer high quality health care services.

We have also come to learn that policy makers hardly have data to influence good patient related policies. The VODAN platform is making data available for better policy decisions on funding, infrastructure development and personnel recruitment by the government policy makers, international health organizations etc. From the available data, physicians can address patient safety from errors made in medical prescriptions and drug interaction. A big window has opened where physicians can network, enhance consultation and promote telemedicine. This patient data will enrich medical research in respective health facilities.

Therefore, VODAN has introduced the importance of data findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability (FAIR) making data visiting automated. Each physician is aware of patient data confidentiality, especially when visiting specific data. However, the VODAN platform only addresses aggregated data without names of patients. From this perspective, it does not contravene laws of respective countries on data confidentiality. Hence, physicians as data owners will preserve the control of their data while giving the opportunity for data to be interoperable. The physicians find VODAN as giving confidence and trust on data quality and specific data provenance. For instance, there will be a systematic review of biobanks in collaborative countries, to upload onto a data sharing platform and focus on epidemiological data to characterize a chosen disease like cancer across all countries.

We have also observed that most health facilities and institutions are not able to sustain themselves beyond the donor support. However, with VODAN the high-quality training conducted by research students and their professors has opened our eyes to sustainability beyond the donor support. How? Data stewards from our respective health facilities can act as trainers of trainees in respective countries by charging a fee for the training in health information systems. We have seen the importance of planning seminars with stakeholders involved in data management to embrace FAIR data principles.

From this perspective, there will be improved patient data information exchange across stakeholders. Therefore, VODAN could also support different ministries of health (MOH), higher education and those handling electronic data in each country to train in FAIR data control and governance management. Because data stewards from each health facility would have been trained by VODAN, in technical skills and curriculum development, they too can become FAIR data tutors for the government, schools, colleges, universities and agencies.

Thank you for this opportunity.

We the Physicians,  
Signed by



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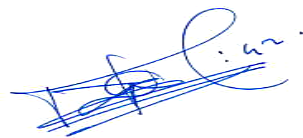
Dr Alex Mremi (Tanzania), Anatomical Pathologist and Head of department At KCMC Pathology Department (Tanzania)



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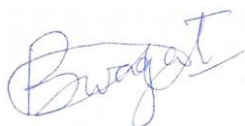
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