Access and use of information by primary health care providers in rural Uganda: a qualitative approach.

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The article summarises findings from a qualitative study that was conducted in rural Uganda, East Africa. The main aim of the study was to investigate the accessibility and use of health information in the lower echelons of Primary Health Care (PHC). Women, as PHC providers in an African family, were focussed on, as well as health workers. An interview schedule that consisted of open questions and one relating to health information critical incidents was used. A holistic inductive paradigm was adopted with a grounded theory analysis. The findings highlight a model of information behaviour that was driven by the value and impact of information unlike previous information models, which have been driven by information needs. The value and effect of information on PHC was as experienced and reported by the interviewees. For example, information was valuable in the prevention and detection of diseases, management of illnesses, decision-making, improving knowledge and promoting health, administration, behavioural change, overcoming misconceptions, and community support. In some critical situations, however, it was difficult to access the required information or information source at the right time in rural Uganda, which sometimes resulted in loss of lives. Unmet health information needs therefore remain a challenge to the health of Ugandans. The need for and value of information in rural Uganda led to the institution of an informal mechanism of health information provision. It was, therefore, recommended that the local capacity should be built or strengthened to enable it to sustain health information provision, a participatory and multi-sectoral approach involving all stakeholders was suggested, more repackaging of information to suit the needs of rural health workers and women, the need for health workers to provide more information to patients, and further research were recommended.

Keywords: Information models; Value of information; Information use; Information behaviour; Primary health care; Women; Information activities in rural Africa.