



# OpenMRS

MEDICAL RECORD SYSTEM

## OpenMRS Summary

OpenMRS is an open source EMR and global community of volunteers seeking to improve better healthcare delivery within resource-constrained areas. OpenMRS is a software platform and a reference application which enables design of a customized medical records system with no programming knowledge (although medical and systems analysis knowledge is required). It is a common platform upon which medical informatics efforts in developing countries can be built. The system is based on a conceptual database structure which is not dependent on the actual types of medical information required to be collected or on particular data collection forms and so can be customized for different uses.

OpenMRS is now in use around the world (see the [OpenMRS Atlas](#)), including South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Haiti, India, China, United States, Pakistan, the Philippines, and [many other places](#). This work is supported in part by [many organizations](#) including international and government aid groups, NGO's, as well as for-profit and nonprofit corporations.

## What is Open Source Software?

Open source software is freely available, globally collaborative, tools created to help others without the expectation of personal gain. It is also opening the 'source' – i.e., opening the developer by getting them to adopt [open behavior](#):

- Willingness to share failures as well as successes
- Adopting (open) community practices of development.
- Getting developers to share code before it's "ready".
- Teaching (pay it forward!), since we're all in this together.

## Why is it important?

Freely available software gives resource-constrained areas access to helpful tools, in order to accomplish their ability to deliver better healthcare. It allows developers to give back to society and improve the community of learners and educators. Lastly, we think that the open source environment challenges developers to think about code in a way that is useful to many, which strengthens their ability to develop more robust code. This collaboration allows for more rapid and highly specific improvements to be made because of the increased work capacity.

In our case, open source has important additional benefits. Health care is extremely customized in the local application. Off the shelf software cannot address the concerns of local practitioners, particularly in resource-poor settings. Open source provides a sense of ownership to the local people, while giving them the tools to make the changes necessary to deliver better care. Also, in resource-limited settings, accessing the work of others to accelerate the deployment of new functionality, reporting tools, etc. is the only way that these could feasibly be done given the resource constraints.

## What changes do you hope it will bring (for your country/region)?

OpenMRS creates the tools for better medical record keeping. These records provide more information to help healthcare providers deliver better patient care, and helps Governments make informed decisions, resulting in nationwide improvements to healthcare delivery. Open Source also goes beyond any region or country because it helps bridge gaps to create a global community.

## What is the future of Open Source Software?

The future possibilities of Open sourced software is endless so long as there are people with shared interests and passions to help others. Open source will continue to grow and influence best-practices for software development. Instead of choosing whether source code should be made open, people will default to open source development and choose to close their source only as exceptions to the new norm. As global internet access increases, needs of local communities will become more apparent, requiring open source best-practices for their needs.