

Poster abstract

E-messages as a tool for improved information exchange across levels in the health care sector: intentions and realities

Line Melby, Researcher, Norwegian Centre for Electronic Patient Record Research (NSEP), Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

Ragnhild Hellesø, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Faculty of Medicine, Institute of Nursing and Health Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway

Correspondence to: Line Melby, E-mail: line.melby@ntnu.no

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to present a study exploring how an electronic message (e-message) system was adapted and used in health care. The e-message system was developed to support and strengthen communication and information exchange between health care providers in a university hospital and the affiliated municipality. Implementing e-messages is expected to enhance quality of care for patients in need of municipal health care services post-hospital.

Theory: Latour's (1987) model of translation is used to analyse users' adoption of the e-message system. The translation model emphasises agency on part of all users, and is therefore useful for understanding varying acceptance of technologies and consequently varying technological working practices.

Methods: In total 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with approx. 50 different actors, covering physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, clerical staff and project leaders for the e-message system. The interviews took place over three periods during 2006 and 2007.

Results and conclusion: The e-message system is understood and deployed in different ways by various actors, though the overall conclusion by the health personnel is that e-messages are a useful service.

Discussion: Applying a translation approach is useful for understanding how people put a technology to use, including providing knowledge about both enabling and constraining elements when implementing a technological tool. Changes in working practices and internal routines should accompany the implementation of e-messages in order to utilise its potential.

Keywords

electronic message system, ICT

Poster presentation available from:

<http://www.integratedcarenetwork.org/Sweden2008/slides/melby-poster.pdf>