

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

What are the enablers and barriers of e-consultations in primary health care in Croatia: are Croatian GPs special? A research protocol.

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Introduction

E-consultations (EC) can facilitate vertical integration of primary health care (PHC) with hospital based specialist consultant services. A growing body of evidence shows that EC improves timely access to specialist consultation and patient and provider satisfaction. While there are numerous examples of successful EC implementation in various countries, there have also been failures. The factors associated with successful or failed attempts at EC have not yet been identified. As such, we propose a study to explore the enablers and barriers in EC implementation in PHC using a case of an EC implementation pilot initiative in 2018 in Zagreb, Croatia.

Theory/Methods

This research will employ a mixed methods approach involving semi structured interviews and analysis of secondary administrative data.

Secondary data analysis will be conducted using the usage data where physician groups can be categorized into “adopters” and “laggards”. Users will be asked to take part in the interviews.

Interviews will be conducted with PHC physicians who participated in the EC pilot and fell into either ‘adopters’ or ‘laggards’ category. Thematic analysis (TA) will be used to develop a conceptualization of perceived enablers and barriers for the successful adoption of EC. The interviews will consist of a set of questions exploring the experiences and opinions of the PHC physicians gathered throughout the steps of the pilot.

Results

The results of this study will highlight the various perceived barriers and facilitators that can be used to inform successful implementation of EC initiatives. Problematic areas in the implementation of EC in PHC which could be specific to the studied case or more widely or generally applicable. The fit of the findings with the existing frameworks will be assessed.

Discussion

This research will offer insight for decision makers looking to improve system flow and access to care in understanding barriers and facilitators for successfully adopting EC approaches. PHC is an entry point of

healthcare system and coordinates different services in health care. Understanding of the factors that facilitate the implementation of ICT solutions in PHC could help the future efforts to improve the system's efficiency and integration.

As health systems seek innovative and disruptive models to better serve patients in primary care, barriers to technology implementation will need to be addressed.