

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Beyond the relationship between the healthcare provider and the patient with an emerging next generation of electronic health records

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Introduction

An emerging next generation of electronic health records (EHRs) is expected to see greater realisation of benefits through empowering healthcare stakeholders including patients, providers, and researchers to do things differently. EHR technology is evolving because of the widespread availability of key enabling technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), genomic sequencing, and cloud storage. With the increasing adoption of EHRs and their ever-evolving functionality and utility, comes a wide spectrum of associated ethical and social concerns. Emerging technology, such as ePortals, AI decision support systems, voice recognition software and wearable devices, are expected to increase the prominence of EHR technology within the health domain.

Policy context and objective

This research is timely because EHR technology is still at an early stage of adoption in many countries. For example, large improvements are projected in the next 10 years in the Irish health IT infrastructure. Several Irish government policies aim to transform healthcare through eHealth, e.g. Sláintecare eHealth pillar extends to 2030, the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, the Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019, and Project Ireland 2040.

We have conducted a scoping literature review, to explore which EHR related ethical concerns were being debated in the literature and why these ethical concerns were debated. This review will be useful to a range of stakeholders involved in a safe, legal and ethical development, implementation and use of EHRs including healthcare providers, policymakers, and IT develop

Highlights

The literature identified a large range of ethical values associated with EHR technology. There was a strong consensus in the academic literature on the ethical values associated with EHR technology. Privacy has been identified as the most frequently mentioned value

in the academic literature. The literature on the ethical and social effects of EHRs focuses predominantly on the relation between the healthcare professional and the patient.

Comments on transferability

This abstract describes the academic discussion on the ethics of EHRs in the English language. The findings are therefore not limited to one jurisdiction.

Conclusions

Because of the growing prominence of EHR technology, the focus on the relationship between care provider and patient needs to be expanded. More emphasis is needed on relationships between the technology and healthcare stakeholders including patients, providers, and technologists.

The growing awareness of the value of personal data is being experienced across all sectors incorporating digital technology. Recent scandals around technology in other sectors, for example around disinformation and news on social networks, can inform ethical inquiries into EHR technology. These inquiries should elucidate issues around the importance of relationships between stakeholders, transparency and accountability or lack thereof. The role of health technology assessment (HTA) to inform stakeholders about the social aspects, and ethical and legal issues is becoming more urgent.