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HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING LIVES OF OLDER ADULTS IN LONG TERM POST-ACUTE CARE

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Statement of the problem: Communication technology, specifically, health information exchange (HIE) is creating opportunities for improving lives of older adults in long term post-acute care (LTPAC) settings. There is an increasing number of older adults worldwide. By 2050, the number of people aged 60 years and over is expected to increase from 605 million to 2 billion people, with the proportion of the world's population over 60 years of age to double from about 11 per cent to 22 per cent (WHO, 2014). Moreover, there are forecasts for substantial increases in the number of people with severe chronic conditions and/or disabilities in most parts of the world because of changes in fertility and life expectancy over the next fifty years. (WHO, 2002). Although many older adults will continue to live in their own homes or communities, some with formal or informal caregiving support, there is still a growing need for LTPAC services. In the United States, the number of people using LTPAC services is projected to increase from 15 million in 2000 to 27 million in 2050 (Harris-Kojetin, Sengupta, Park-Lee, & Valverde, 2013).

Methodology: A literature review was conducted to evaluate the state of HIE and its effects in LTPAC settings.

Findings: Findings are summarized and presented to inform the current state and future potential of HIE in LTPAC, in the US and globally. It is critical to provide the right medical information to clinicians as older adults transition from a hospital (e.g. after a broken hip) to a LTPAC facility. Most commonly, a summary of care is sent from the hospital to the LTPAC facility, faxed or pinned to the gown of an incoming patient. HIE is an information technology alternative, and can streamline communication globally, allowing timely receipt and use of medical information, leading to improved care opportunities for older adults.

Biography

Rebecca A Meehan is an Assistant Professor of Health Informatics at Kent State University, where she teaches health information systems, research, human factors and usability in health informatics. Meehan earned her doctorate in medical sociology and gerontology from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. She has over 20 years of experience in applied gerontology, health research in technology, and software development. Meehan's research focuses on usability of health IT (electronic health record) and the user experience of health information technology in long term care settings.

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