

2nd International Conference on Health Informatics and Technology

July 27-29, 2015 Valencia, Spain

The role of electronic health records in structuring nursing handoff communication and maintaining situation awareness

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In healthcare institutions, work must continue 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A team of nurses is needed to provide around-the-clock patient care, and this process requires transfer of patient care responsibilities, a process known as a “handoff.” The study was conducted in the Sultanate of Oman, exploring the role of electronic health records in structuring handoff communication and maintaining situation awareness among nurses during handoff. Several theoretical frameworks and models were used to guide this study, which aims to assess the satisfaction of nurses regarding the usefulness and ease of use of the electronic health records for nurses during handoff, to explore the contents and the context of nursing handoff, and to explore the artifacts that the nurses use to in order to ensure the continuity of care and the delivery of quality handoff reports. A mixed-method, quantitative and qualitative, approach was used to study the role of the electronic health records in structuring handoff communication and to explore handoff practices in Oman. The findings of this study demonstrated that the nurses had positive perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of electronic health records for structuring handoff communication and promoting effective and efficient transition of patient care during handoff. The study also revealed that nurses use a variety of artifacts to document, communicate, and coordinate patients’ care reasonability during handoff. The electronic health records, Al-Shifa, were found to be the primary artifact that the nurses used to facilitate electronic documentation of patient care and to promote effective and accurate communication among the nurses during the transition of care. The use of electronic health records during handoff was reported to increase the accessibility to patients’ medical records and ensure both the continuity of care and the delivery of quality handoff reports. Despite the integration of electronic health records into the handoff reports, all the observed nurses (N=97) and the surveyed nurses (N=157) used a piece of paper to summarize the key information they received during the handoff report. Throughout the shift, this piece of paper served as a non-digital artifact that provided “quick-reference” for the nurses as well as a “to-do list”.

Biography

Said Alghenaimi attained his PhD in Information Science and Learning Technologies from the University of Missouri, USA in the year 2012. He started his Profession as a staff nurse in 1998. Over the past 17 years, he assumed many roles and responsibilities. He worked as a Usability Expert at the Information Experience Laboratory at the University of Missouri. This has led him to do more researches in Human-Computer Interaction, Human Information Behaviors, and usability evaluations of websites and mobile applications. Currently, he is the Dean of Rustaq Nursing Institute, Sultanate of Oman.

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