

Why we need Health Information Technology for Maintaining and Accessing Health Care Information

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Introduction

The field of medical and health informatics is young and is growing, and offer many opportunities. For example, US government is promoting the use health information technology to reduce costs and improve the efficiency and safety of the health care system. A push by the US government to implement and enhance electronic health records is evidence by billions of dollars earmarked in the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act, passed as part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Furthermore, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) reported that Investment in health information technology, the privacy and security of patient data, and ramping up social media efforts will be top concerns for health care organizations in 2012 [1].

Health information technology would allow medical professionals, such as doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, and other medical professionals easy access to a number of services, such as patient's records, dental services, nursing services, social services, and crisis and critical care services, etc. By using the health information technology to update and maintain information in real-time, available medical, social and community resources may be allocated appropriately and efficiently by the users of the technology. This may result in decreased costs for treatment of individual patients and for the health care system as a whole. Records of available services may be updated and stored in the database and accessed from multiple locations. Archival copies of the database may be analyzed over time to provide statistical data on the availability and effectiveness of medical and health services in the served geographic area. Clinical diagnoses and other data may be used for epidemiological analysis. For example, the PwC survey found that

60% of the population would be comfortable sharing data if they were used to coordinate care, and 54% would agree to share it if the data were used to support real-time decision-making for their care [1].

By analyzing the data collected by the technology, health care providers may improve health care services by sharing data across provider's boundaries. This will allow providers to improve services by ensuring the appropriate professional attends to a patient's individual needs and providing real-time information about the patient, care givers and available resources. The technology may enhance an administrator's ability to examine trends in the allocation and utilization of nurses, social workers, doctors and any other health care providers in order to provide adequate staffing and staff availability. The technology could provide valuable information for both recruitment and retention of employees. The technology may also ensure that reliable data is available for doctors, nurses and social workers and provide data for statistical analysis. The technology may be implemented over a larger geographic area (such states) data from different geographic areas may be synthesized allowing the examination of trends from across the areas to aid in strategic decision making on many levels.

For a number of reasons, we believe that the introduction of Journal of Health and Medical Informatics into the health and medical informatics community is timely. For those of you that submit articles to our journal, we will work to ensure rapid turnaround of manuscripts so that the information is current and is relevant to health information technology.

Reference

1. Pamela LD (2011) Health care's top 2012 issues: technology, social media, security.

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Received July 17, 2012; Accepted July 17, 2012; Published July 19, 2012

Citation: Opiyo SO (2012) Why we need Health Information Technology for Maintaining and Accessing Health Care Information. J Health Med Inform 3:e103. doi:10.4172/2157-7420.1000e103

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