

Adoption of electronic medical records in the primary practice setting



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In this study it is seen that although the primary care setting is an important link in providing personalized medical care, a little has been done to enable the primary care setting to utilize EMR's.

About 5% of the primary care settings have EMR in the US in the year 2002. The primary care settings would be handling several forms of information and several populations that require specialized care. However, there have been potential problems with the implementation of EMR's in the US, which include various financial, clinical and technical problems.

This study searched for the various problems faced by primary care settings in implementing EMR's in various databases including Pubmed, TRIPS Database, Cochrane, BMJ, Google Scholar and NEJM. Out of the 112 studies that were searched, 10 of the most relevant to adoption of EMR systems in primary care settings were selected and examined. The studies dealt with the various problems faced by the implementation of EMR's in primary care settings and some suggested ways of overcoming the same.

Overall, it was found that EMR's are very useful to primary care settings, but there are special problems whilst implementing EMR's in primary care settings. This has to be anticipated and overcome by ensuring greater financial and human resource allocations. EMR's in primary care settings would ensure an improvement in the quality of care, reduction in medical errors and improvement in the user-satisfaction.

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Introduction

Primary care is the provision of an integrated care system that can be easily accessible by the people to enable personalized medical care, along with the practice of family medicine and ensuring community health. In any part of the world, the greatest number of people to obtain healthcare services would be from primary care centers.

Several chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, heart diseases, depression, and mental disorders are provided care in the primary care centers. Besides, the primary care centers also provide preventive and diagnostic facilities.

During the course of treatment, the primary care centers have to manage the health information of the patient and ensure that same is integrated with evidence-based knowledge to determine the future course of action. Usually, in the past, the information of patients in the primary care centers has been handled through the traditional paper records.

This may be in spite the fact that the tertiary care hospitals and other healthcare organizations have facilities to handle the information of the patient electronically. In the year 2002, about 5% of the primary care facilities in the US had EMR facilities (Bates, 2002). In the US about 80% of all the physicians are from small practices that contain 1 to 10 physicians. For larger practices, the adoption of EMR's is better.

In the year 2003, about 13% of the single physicians were using EMR's, 16% of the 2-4 physician groups, 20% of the 5 to 9 physician groups, 29% of the 10 to 19 physician groups, and 39% of the above 20 physician groups. In the year 2006, the single physician EMR adoption increased to 24%, 28% for the

2 physician group, 30% for the 3 to 5 physician group, 31% for the 6 to 10 physician group and 46.5% for the above 11 physician groups (Bates, 2002).