Electronic Patient Records Briefing Notes

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ACTION for Health

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☐ Working Paper   ☒ Briefing Notes

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Briefing Notes

Many benefits have been listed for the utilization of electronic records, the primary benefit being that of more and better access to patient information. Based on the assumption that access to more patient information will contribute to the ability to provide better quality care, this paper is a review of various studies conducted on the implementation of Electronic Patient Records (EPR) and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) in primary care settings, to obtain a general overview of the lessons learned during such implementations. It is important to note that these lessons are by no means comprehensive, and that they are very much context dependant. However, they are some of the more general lessons that can be applied to different settings. The paper is broken down into two sections, one focuses on the lessons learned at the macro level, where top-down change is initiated, and the other focuses on the local level of practice (micro).

Macro

- At the health authority level, minimum system requirements should be identified.
- At the health ministry level data standards should be developed and an accreditation program should be set up for suppliers.
- The health authority should facilitate the development of a consortia of suppliers with shared values, which will in turn lead to the realization of the long term strategic objectives of all parties involved.
- Funding should be provided for conducting studies on the costs and benefits of EPR and EMR and the identification of those benefiting from the system, to help in the development of risk sharing programs for funding purposes.

Micro

- Practices should obtain systems based on the requirements of their practice and should redesign workstations to accommodate the new systems while providing an ergonomic workspace for users.
- Training should be provided based on an assessment of users' readiness in terms of technological and organizational insight.
- Training should include factual knowledge of the system, skills required in using the system and the values and norms underlying the system.
- Practices should ensure the accuracy and completeness of data, as the realization of any benefits from the system is dependant on the quality of data that can be extracted from the system.
- An organizational wide understanding should be developed of why change is necessary, which will in turn lead to higher acceptance of the system.

For more information, see Electronic Patient Records, by Nicki Kahnamoui.