

Lost in Transition: The Hidden Costs of EHR Integration in Hospitals

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The healthcare industry's transition to Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems, while promising increased efficiency, accuracy, and patient care, has inadvertently compromised the essence of healthcare, highlighting challenges related to the doctor-patient relationship, the psychological impact on healthcare professionals, and the economic implications for healthcare organizations.

The implementation of EHR systems has notably impacted the doctor-patient relationship, often resulting in a decline in the quality of patient-centered care. Physicians spend more time interacting with computer screens than with their patients, hindering the ability to establish a strong rapport. This loss in human interaction can adversely affect the quality of care and patient satisfaction. "Doctors may spend more time looking at their screens than at patients, potentially diminishing empathy and the patient experience" (Aspris et al., 2017, p. 420).

The demands of EHR systems can have a significant psychological toll on healthcare professionals, contributing to burnout and job dissatisfaction. The increased time spent on data entry and documentation can be overwhelming for physicians and nurses. The clerical burden associated with EHRs negatively affects the well-being of healthcare providers. This loss of job satisfaction is a critical concern, as it can lead to high turnover rates and a decrease in the quality of healthcare services. "The clerical burden is contributing to burnout and disillusionment among physicians and nurses" (Shanafelt et al., 2016, p. 941).

The financial implications of adopting EHR systems can be substantial, posing a considerable burden on healthcare organizations. The initial costs of acquiring and implementing EHRs, along with ongoing maintenance and training expenses, can strain budgets. Smaller healthcare organizations may face barriers to accessing technology, leading to potential inequities. The diversion of funds to EHR adoption can reduce the allocation of resources for other critical aspects of healthcare delivery, potentially compromising patient care in the long run. "The substantial financial investment required for EHR systems can be a barrier for smaller healthcare organizations, potentially leading to inequities in access to technology" (Blavin & Ramos, 2018, p. 2).

In conclusion, while EHR systems offer numerous advantages in terms of healthcare efficiency and data management, there are considerable losses in key dimensions when hospitals institute these systems. The doctor-patient relationship can suffer due to reduced face-to-face interaction and empathy. The psychological well-being of healthcare professionals is compromised, leading to burnout and job dissatisfaction. Additionally, the financial burden of implementing EHRs can strain healthcare organizations' budgets, potentially impacting the overall quality of healthcare services. Healthcare institutions must carefully consider and address these challenges to ensure that the benefits of EHR adoption are not overshadowed by the drawbacks.

References:

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