Working with qualitative data from electronic health records (EHRs) presents several challenges, two of which are particularly significant: data quality issues and difficulties in data extraction and analysis.

1. Data Quality Issues  
   EHRs frequently contain poor-quality data due to a variety of factors. One major issue is the heavy workload and time constraints faced by healthcare providers, which often lead to inconsistent or incomplete documentation (Ni et al., 2019, p. 1). As one orthopedic doctor explained, "One day, you have to take charge of three or four new inpatients, you have to go to surgery, and then you have to do some of your own things, so the quality of EHR data can be affected" (Ni et al., 2019, p. 6). Errors may also arise when busy frontline staff enter clinical observations into the system (Honeyford et al., 2022, p. 4). Additionally, the phenomenon of "missing not at random" data needs to be carefully considered, as imputation methods may introduce bias into research results (Honeyford et al., 2022, p. 4).
2. Difficulties in Data Extraction and Analysis  
   Extracting and analyzing qualitative data from EHRs is a complex process. Since EHR data is not structured with research purposes in mind, it often requires extensive processing (Honeyford et al., 2022, p. 5). Healthcare practices also struggle to manipulate and align measurement time frames with quality improvement goals (Oberlander & Papanicolas, 2017, p. 635). Furthermore, there is often limited functionality for generating reports on clinical quality measures at various levels, such as by individual clinician (Oberlander & Papanicolas, 2017, p. 637). The combination of vendor-standardized documentation requirements, misalignment with clinical workflows, and a lack of awareness among clinical teams about documentation rules leads to unreliable reports (Oberlander & Papanicolas, 2017, p. 640).

These challenges underscore the need for improved EHR systems and better data management practices to enhance the quality and usability of qualitative data in healthcare research and quality improvement initiatives.

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