Olivia Samples

Case Studies

Lipscomb University

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Super Crunchers: How should physicians treat evidence-based medicine?

Ian Ayres claims that thinking by numbers is a requirement for modern intelligence and applies this idea within the medical field for evidence-based medicine in his book, *Super Crunchers*. Historically, physicians have chosen diagnosis, treatments, and prescriptions based on experience and what they remember from graduate school. Scientific research has been too overwhelming to apply efficiently within their practice, so groundbreaking research is typically missed within the day to day. Ayres argues that our modern big data technologies offer the resources to effectively digest and apply this flood of new knowledge using tools such as Isabel Healthcare in order to improve diagnosis accuracy without wasting a physician’s valuable time.

Not only is it difficult to teach an old dog new tricks, you also shouldn’t take candy from a baby/a group of medical professionals. People in general do not like change. Ayres shows this when describing the 100,000 lives campaign for implementing hospital sterilization, and the amount of effort that went into just getting doctors to routinely wash their hands. While getting the healthcare world to change their current way of thinking is extremely difficult, Ayres did not mention an even more controversial topic: the cost effects of implementing evidence-based medicine tools.

The healthcare system is a business. It is in place to make money. The people in charge of making decisions so that the business will make money are doctors. Doctors make money with their time and expertise. Doctors know what illnesses make more money. Doctors know what illnesses take more time to cure. Doctors know what illnesses require more expensive medications. Evidence-based medicinal tools do not.

Who cares if we can more accurately diagnose and treat diseases when we would be making less money? While this question seems cruel and heartless, it is really the big idea that the healthcare system eventually stops at. Implementing a tool that could potentially decrease the number of needed physicians in the workforce is not something that physicians are going to stand behind. A tool like Isabel Healthcare may suggest cheaper treatment plans which is not something that major medical providers will benefit from. It could reveal more affordable prescription options which pharmaceutical companies will not see as high of profits from. While the super cruncher mindset may be medically beneficial, it is not yet cost beneficial.

The infiltration of tools applying evidence-based medicine has started to become somewhat evident within the medical field. For instance, many healthcare insurance providers offer teladoc services and resources for individuals wanting to do their own research. Also, tools such as Isabel Healthcare are available for physicians if they so choose. However, system wide mandates of these tools being used is still very far away, and the movement should shoot for small wins as they try to infiltrate this for-profit system.