

Abstract

Background

In 2013 a strategy for the introduction of a national Electronic Health Record (EHR) for the Republic of Ireland was launched. The objective of this is to implement a nationwide electronic system that will link up electronic patient records in healthcare institutions across the country. The intention is that the patients' medical information will follow them through different facilities allowing for information sharing. The purpose of sharing this information is to avoid adverse events occurring to patients, unnecessary replication of tests and better continuity of care. It is also expected that this will prevent needless delays in treatment while the patients' information is sent from other institutions. Many countries have been using various forms of Electronic Patient Records for several years. In Ireland we are uniquely positioned to learn and benefit from the experiences of these countries when looking to implement our own eHealth solutions. However, very few Irish healthcare facilities have had the benefit of the use of an EPR. One public hospital in Dublin has an established EPR that has been in situ for several years. This system is utilised by the melanoma cancer team to coordinate the care of patients.

Research question

The hypothesis for this study is that all members of the multidisciplinary team utilise the current EPR for the melanoma patient pathway. The purpose of this research therefore is to assess the experiences of the diverse members of a team involved in the care of melanoma patients. The goal is to discover how they use an EPR in relation to the workflow of the service and whether they find it to be a useful tool. The aim of this is to try to understand how an EPR is utilised in an Irish setting and if it complements the work of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) and benefits overall patient safety. Is the EPR a useful tool in the care of cancer patients?

Literature review

A literature review was carried out to establish current thinking in the fields of Health Information Technologies (HIT) as well as current research in clinical areas relating to skin cancer, clinical pathways and patient safety.

Methodology

A quantitative research approach was utilised and an anonymised online questionnaire was the chosen method for data collection. Questionnaire answers were then analysed and data was analysed.

Study conclusion

The hypothesis of this study was that all of the members of the melanoma multidisciplinary team used the electronic patient record in the melanoma patient pathway. This was found not to be the case as only a proportion of the team said reported using the EPR in the pathway and for communication; therefore the hypothesis was not proven.