Adoption of Electronic Health Records in U.S. Nursing Homes

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BACKGROUND

- Electronic health records (EHRs) have emerged as a promising tool to improve health care quality.
- The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) of 2009 is a federal investment to encourage EHR adoption through incentive programs, including requirements for meaningful use such as the implementation of electronic clinical decision support systems (CDSS).
- However, nursing homes (NHs) are excluded from these incentive programs.
- Facing substantial barriers, NHs appear to be lagging behind in EHR adoption rates compared to other health care settings.
- Research on systematically assessing rates of EHR adoption in NHs on a national level is lacking.

OBJECTIVE

To assess EHR adoption in a national sample of NHs.

METHODS

- Data used in this study were collected as part of a larger study to examine infection prevention and control in US NHs.
- A cross-sectional survey of randomly sampled free-standing NHs was conducted between December 2013 and December 2014.
- The 34-item survey was completed by the person in charge of the infection control program.
- Questions were included in the survey to assess whether NHs had adopted EHRs and in what year.
- One question asked about tools and resources used in the facility to help make clinical decisions, including CDSS.
- Descriptive analyses were performed bivariate analysis was used to compare facilities that had and had not adopted EHRs.

RESULTS

- Data were explored from a geographically diverse national sample of 927 NHs.
- About half of NHs (49%) had adopted EHRs at the time of the survey.
- 76% had adopted EHRs in 2000 or later, and 35% in 2013 or later.
- NHs with EHRs were significantly more likely than those without EHRs to report that electronic CDSS was used in the facility to help make clinical decisions (11% vs. 5%, P<0.001).

CONCLUSIONS

- This national study confirmed that EHR adoption in NHs is lower compared with what has been reported in acute care hospitals.
- The results indicate that only a small proportion of NHs where EHRs had been adopted would fulfill the requirements for meaningful use, and that a small group of NHs use some electronic information systems despite not having adopted EHRs.
- A comparison to data from acute care hospitals indicates that while EHR adoption in both settings has been steadily rising, adoption in acute care increased more rapidly after the HITECH act was enacted, indicating that the inclusion of NHs in incentive programs might further increase the EHR adoption in this setting.

Further research is needed to better understand EHR adoption in NHs, and associated barriers and benefits.

REFERENCES

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