

Informed consent for patient data processing in electronic health records

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Abstract

Objective

To report the results of a systematic review of national eHealth policies of different countries in relation to patient consent in patient data processing in electronic health records

Method

eHealth policies of 19 (14.07%) countries are reviewed with regard to patient consent, from a total of 135 countries that are indexed in the World Health Organization Directory of eHealth Policies. 68 (50.37%) policies were excluded based on language and 67 policies in English were selected for further consideration. These 67 (49.62%) policies were further evaluated resulting in exclusion of 43 (31.85%) policies due to policies being outdated and 5 (3.70%) due to broken links. Finally, a total of 19 (14.07%) countries were selected for the review.

Results

57.89% out of 19 countries require patients' informed consent to store patient data, 26.32% allow selective storage of patient data as defined by the patient, 89.47% require patients' informed consent when sharing or transferring or accessing patient data, 68.42% of the countries allow patients access their own EHR, 73.68% facilitate correction/modification in EHR, and 26.32% facilitate deletion of patient records. 89.47% of countries highlight mechanisms to assure privacy and security of EHR.

Conclusion

Policymakers' emphasis on various ethical concerns raised by EHRs has been increased highlighting patient rights related to eHealth as well as the requirement for compliance to different standards and regulations. eHealth policies must address requiring patients' informed consent in processing of patient data whereas patients have the ability to grant or withhold consent to different processing operations related to their EHR. Furthermore, facilitating patients with access to their own records, facilitating patients with modification, correction and deletion of EHR are widely discussed topics.

Keywords

eHealth, Patient Consent, EHR, Patient Rights