Nearly 70% of Providers Say EHR Technology Improves Care Quality

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Amidst concerns that EHR technology worsens provider burnout, one study showed 64 percent of clinicians say the systems have a positive effect on satisfaction levels.

New research suggests EHR technology may have a relatively positive reputation among healthcare professionals, with nearly 70 percent of surveyed providers reporting that EHR systems improve care quality.

This insight comes from a recent Future Health Index 2019 report commissioned by Philips.

Researchers surveyed 3,100 healthcare professionals and 15,000 healthcare consumers across 15 countries to gauge opinions of EHR technology in the current digitized care system.

While researchers found many healthcare professionals see the benefits of EHR technology and other health IT tools in clinical care, providers in most countries are not using health IT to its fullest potential.

For example, 80 percent of providers have engaged in health data exchange with other providers within their own care facility. However, only 32 percent of surveyed clinicians have shared patient health data with providers outside their facility.

Fifty-six percent of providers who do not share patient health data with outside hospitals and health systems lack the health IT infrastructure to do so. The lack of EHR interoperability between different provider systems restricts the scope of health data exchange for half of clinicians.

Fifty percent of providers also cited concerns over data privacy and security as an impediment to health data exchange with care facilities outside their health system.

In addition to this general lag in advanced health IT use among care professionals, many clinicians also struggle with EHR implementation and administrative burden.

“Many countries experience challenges with the implementation of digital health records and there is a common assumption that healthcare professionals feel these records can simply add administrative tasks to their workload,” wrote researchers in the report.

Health data exchange between patients and providers is similarly low. Only 36 percent of surveyed patients who use patient portals or other health IT regularly share their health information with their provider. Meanwhile, 26 percent of patients share health data with providers when they have a specific concern.

Despite these drawbacks, most surveyed healthcare providers agree EHR technology has had an overall positive impact on care quality.

Furthermore, 64 percent of surveyed providers said EHR technology has had a positive impact on provider satisfaction. Fifty-nine percent reported that EHR use has helped to boost patient health outcomes.

“Additionally, 57 percent of healthcare professionals report that, in the past five years, their experience has been positively impacted by having access to patients’ full medical history,” wrote researchers.

Patients who engage patient portals and other technologies to access and share their data also generally report higher levels of satisfaction.

“Those with access to their digital health record report better personal experiences in healthcare and better quality of care available to them than those who do not have access,” stated researchers.

Specifically, 82 percent of patients with access to their EHRs rate their experience with their providers as good, very good, or excellent. Comparatively, 66 percent of patients without access to their EHRs reported having a positive experience with their provider.

“The data suggests that there could be greater potential for individuals’ uptake of digital health technology and mobile health apps if usage of these technologies was more frequently recommended by healthcare professionals,” authors wrote in the report.

“There is also evidence to suggest that individuals will be more likely to use digital health technology if it’s easier to share data with their healthcare professional,” they added.

Overall, patients who access and exchange their own digital health information are more likely to have a positive perception of care quality.
“The challenge, now, is to encourage more individuals to share data with their healthcare professional, giving healthcare professionals access to more up-to-date and complete information that will allow for more coordinated patient care,” suggested researchers.