
Cross-Clinic Exchange of IT Experience Could Empower European Hospitals



Information technology improves efficiency in a hospital setting, but the establishment of a modern IT infrastructure can come at a considerable cost in terms of time and financial resources. In countries affected by economic crises, where basic provisions are already in short supply, possibilities may be further constrained by prohibitively-priced technology. Hospitals from European Union nations stand to benefit from an intensive but inexpensive exchange of experience between systems and across borders.

Information Networks Improve Healthcare

High quality healthcare relies increasingly on electronic networking to serve its patient populations. Aware of the opportunities IT affords to hospital systems but the limited extent of digitalisation, The European Association of Hospital Managers (EAHM) is campaigning for coordinated efforts between clinics and between users and manufacturers of IT equipment. The organisation strives to promote the exchange of experience across borders with its benchmarking events.

Heinz Kölking, EAHM's president, states the case. "We attach great importance to this theme. The advantages of using IT for smooth treatment processes, patient safety, transparency, and the all important area of cross-sector treatment, data exchange between hospitals, specialist centres and GPs, and thus also for the efficiency of healthcare provision, is now undisputed". The EAHM comprises a working group of representatives from 24 hospital manager associations from European nations.

Benchmarking Survey Reveals IT Inconsistencies Across Europe

The European Union recently enlisted auditing and consulting firm PwC to conduct the European Hospital Survey -- Benchmarking Deployment of eHealth Services, which gathered data from 1,717 acute care hospitals in the EU, Iceland and Norway. According to the results, there is considerable variance in the way hospitals across Europe deal with the electronic exchange of patient data, including diagnoses, letters and laboratory findings. Around 50 percent of acute care hospitals in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden are networked with external entities. Meanwhile, the figure for German hospitals is only six percent.

The healthcare systems of European nations vary in their organisation and financial capacities, so it comes as no surprise that such variance exists. Nevertheless, information exchange is what makes IT effective, and a cross-border exchange of experience can be beneficial too.

Upcoming Congress

The EAHM will convene in Berlin for its twenty-fifth Congress between 10 and 12 September 2014. Organised by the German Association of Hospital Directors (VKD), the event will be attended by approximately 600 hospital directors and managers from across the European Union. Around 16,000 members make up the EAHM, which lists among its goals the promotion of professional competence and senior staff responsibility in the hospital sector in the EU, and influencing directives that affect EU hospitals.

Additional information, including the event's programme, is available at www.eahm-berlin2014.de.

Source: EAHM

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