
Improving Health Information Exchange in the ER



An article published in *Annals of Emergency Medicine* offers guidance on maximising the value of health information exchange (HIE) in emergency departments. The report lists five primary and seven secondary recommendations made by an emergency physician-led workgroup to improve HIE in the emergency room.

"HIE helps emergency physicians — who usually do not have much information about their patients — access patient health information from multiple sources, which is essential for critical, time-sensitive decisions," says article co-author Jeffrey Nielson, MD, MS of Summa Akron City Hospital in Akron, Ohio. The goal is to have a nationwide health information network that will allow physicians easy access to their patients' medical records without compromising their privacy, he explains. "It is a tall order for sure, but not an impossible one," he adds.

The workgroup's five primary recommendations in support of HIE in emergency medicine are:

- Emergency physicians must be involved in regional and federal HIE activities.
- HIE policies must be based on best practices to promote liability protection related to HIE use.
- Federal regulatory standards must prioritise data elements specific to emergency care and have emergency-specific user design.
- Care standards and protocols for effective integration of HIE in emergency department electronic health records (EHRs) should be developed, including workflow optimisations and pushing of important HIE information to the clinician through flags in the EHR.
- Local professional groups should participate with HIEs to assure delivery of appropriate emergency data.

The workgroup also published seven secondary recommendations which would significantly improve HIE for emergency physicians, although these are not focused specifically on emergency medicine.

"Significant changes are needed to support a system of effective national HIE that can rapidly and efficiently yield useful health information to healthcare providers in emergency departments," explains co-author Jason Shapiro, MD, of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, N.Y. "These changes should include support for emergency physician access to all relevant patient information in properly summarised understandable form."

The goal of all emergency physicians is to provide safe and effective emergency care, he notes, and access to well organised patient information will be helpful in achieving that goal.

Source: [American College of Emergency Physicians](#)

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