Healthcare IT Providers Need To Do More To Solicit User Feedback

Information technology (IT) companies need to bring in doctors and other healthcare stakeholders in order to ensure that new technologies and applications are actually useful to the healthcare system – something which is currently fragmented at best, according to a recent paper from North Carolina State University.

"IT enables improvements in healthcare processes; can engage patients and stakeholders; and provide infrastructure to share clinical and financial information more efficiently. All of these things help to make the healthcare system run more smoothly and cost-effectively," says Dr. Fay Cobb Payton, associate professor of information systems at NC State and co-author of the paper.

"But technology alone is not a panacea that will solve the overarching problems facing the health care system, such as difficulties in sharing medical data and ballooning health care costs," Payton says. "For example, IT can streamline processes, such as medical record-keeping, but interorganizational data sharing among clinical stakeholders is lacking and hence stands to impact clinical assessments and outcomes as well as medical decision-making."

To ensure that the IT developed for the healthcare system actually meets the system's needs, the authors of the paper say the IT community needs to adopt a more interdisciplinary approach to product development, design, implementation and research. The authors say bringing in interdisciplinary experts would also help ensure that IT products and applications are implemented in a way that maximises utility for all of the stakeholders involved: patients, researchers, healthcare providers, public health agencies and insures, among others. To that end, Payton says IT development and implementation teams may want to include doctors, nurses, social workers and other end users – not just IT professionals.

"The IT industry needs to solicit outside expertise continually throughout the product and application development process," Payton says. "Interdisciplinary approaches are further needed to address critical issues, such as clinical outcomes, health disparities and treatment management. IT expertise alone does not ensure the best possible product. Feedback from end users in the health care field is critical."

The paper, "Health Care IT: Process, People, Patients and Interdisciplinary Considerations," is published in a special issue of theJournal of the Association for Information Systems.

Source: North Carolina State University

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