

IOM Report: IT Can Support Better Diagnosis



“A well-designed health IT system can facilitate timely access to information, communication among health care professionals, patients, and their families, clinical reasoning and decision making, and feedback and follow-up in the diagnostic process,” an independent research committee has said in its report released today.

In its report *Improving Diagnosis in Health Care*, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (IOM) went on to say that diagnostic errors stemmed from collaboration and communication among clinicians, patients, and their families, and “a health care work system ill-designed to support the diagnostic process, limited feedback to clinicians about the accuracy of diagnoses and a culture that discourages transparency and disclosure of diagnostic errors, which impedes attempts to learn and improve.”

The 369-page report looked at the diagnostic process, factors leading to error and the learning and practice environments amongst other characteristics of mid-diagnosis. A key section of the report named *Technology and Tools In The Diagnostic Process* focused on the role IT has in the process of assessing a patient’s medical condition and how it could help eradicate errors.

“The design of health IT has the potential to support the diagnostic process. By supporting the individuals involved in the diagnostic process and the tasks they perform, health IT may improve diagnostic performance and reduce the potential for diagnostic errors,” it said.

The report committee, comprised of medical and science professionals from around North America, said that most people would experience at least one diagnostic error in their lifetime, sometimes with devastating consequences.

Efforts to improve diagnosis and reduce diagnostic errors had been quite limited, the committee said.

As well as making recommendations on IT, the committee called for more effective teamwork among health care professionals, patients, and families, enhanced training for health care professionals, more emphasis on identifying and learning from diagnostic errors and near misses in clinical practice, a payment and care delivery environment that supported the diagnostic process and a dedicated focus on new research.

Furthermore, federal agencies should develop a coordinated research agenda on the diagnostic process and diagnostic errors by the end of 2016, it said.

Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

Image Credit: IOM

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