

Health IT expert says electronic medical records finally catching on

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The U.S. Olympic Committee is converting to electronic medical records (EMRs) this month for hundreds of athletes who will be competing in London, as well as thousands of other athletes who have been seen by Olympic Committee doctors in recent years.

EMRs also are catching on nationwide as the federal government encourages [health care providers](#) with [financial incentives](#), and Corey Angst, assistant professor of management in the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business and an expert on [health information technology](#), says "Policy makers seemed to have listened and are not just insisting on EMR adoption, but more importantly, they are mandating that the systems be used in a meaningful way. There are specific things that must be measured and reported for hospitals and doctors to receive the incentives."

Angst conducts research on the transformational effect of IT, technology usage and IT value. A proponent of national digitization of [health record](#) information, he believes EMRs standardize processes, increase efficiencies and greatly diminish the potential for [medical errors](#).

"There still continue to be barriers, and the biggest one seems to be convincing doctors that there is value in using EMRs," Angst says. "Some have embraced them, while others remain very resistant, stating that EMRs are not intuitive, don't map well onto their preferred workflow, and are generally difficult and slow to use."

Another barrier is privacy.

"Small but vocal anti-EMR groups and individuals worry that electronic systems can be breached and that simply by digitizing personal information, we are making it much easier for people--authorized and unauthorized-- to access our records," Angst says. "Both are legitimate concerns, but I personally believe we can safeguard against some of these issues and that overall the benefits do outweigh the costs.

"I think it is fantastic that the U.S. [Olympic Committee](#) is finally going digital," Angst says. "I can't imagine the complexity of trying to maintain the mountains of paper records for those athletes. It not only makes sense for their internal network of doctors who treat the athletes, but it also is important for the athlete to be able to have access."

Also, Angst points out, this creates an interesting dilemma related to the many doping claims in sports.

"Presumably, all blood tests and prescription data will be recorded and accessible within the system, and any unauthorized or authorized access would be tracked," he says. "The digital log would show who accessed the information, where, in the past, it was almost impossible to pinpoint this information when everything was on paper."

More information: Angst co-authored e-prescribing papers published in both the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* and *Health Affairs*, as well as a paper about the diffusion of EMRs in *Management Science* and another on EMR privacy concerns in *MIS Quarterly*.

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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