

Access to electronic health records may influence care

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Unlike medical records kept in paper charts, electronic health records (EHR) provide numerous access points to clinicians to review a patient's medical history. A new study has found access to electronic health records in acute care situations may influence the care given to that patient, and in some cases, failure to review the EHR could have adversely affected the medical management.

The [findings are reported](#) in the May 2014 edition of *Health Affairs*. John L. Ulmer, M.D., professor of radiology and chief of neuroradiology at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), is the corresponding author. Co-authors are Michael J. Franczak and Madeline Klein, former research assistants at MCW; Flavius Raslau, M.D., assistant professor of radiology at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine; Jo Bergholte, program manager at MCW; and Leighton P. Mark, professor of radiology at MCW.

In the study, three neuroradiologists at Froedtert & the Medical College Froedtert Hospital analyzed 2,000 head CT scans that had been ordered by emergency department physicians. For each exam, the neuroradiologists compared the medical information generated by the emergency department physicians to the additional information retrieved by interpreting radiologists who had access to EHR patient data.

The interpreting radiologists found that in many of the cases, the additional data in the EHR would have a significant impact on the interpretations of the head CT scans.

In nine percent of the cases, the neuroradiologists predicted the interpretation would have "very likely" been adversely affected had the EHR data not been available. In 22 percent of cases, the additional clinical information found in the EHR was rated as "possibly" having a clinically significant impact on the interpretation of the head CT. "This study exemplifies the power of EHR's and their potential impact on patient care and positive outcomes. Health care providers must recognize the value of implementing EHR's and foster their widespread adoption," said Dr. Ulmer. "The federal government has made a significant investment in the adoption of these systems, particularly with the challenges of expanding remote access to high-quality care."

Provided by Medical College of Wisconsin

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