The Review Of
DIABETIC
STUDIES OPEN ACCESS

The Role Of Electronic Health Records In Improving Patient Care

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Abstract

Background: Electronic health records (EHRs) have revolutionized modern healthcare by replacing traditional paper-based systems with integrated digital platforms designed to enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and safety of patient care. Understanding healthcare professionals' experiences and perceptions regarding EHR utilization is essential for evaluating their role in improving clinical outcomes and identifying areas for system enhancement.
Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 210 healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, and allied health staff. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a validated self-administered questionnaire that assessed demographics, EHR utilization patterns, perceived impacts on patient care, and challenges encountered. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics and inferential analysis (Chi-square and ANOVA tests) with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.
Results: The majority of participants (78.6%) reported daily use of EHRs, and 81.9% had received formal EHR training. Most respondents agreed that EHRs improved accuracy of patient data (90.4%), enhanced communication among providers (88.1%), and reduced medical errors (86.7%). Efficiency and time management were positively influenced in 88.1% of cases. However, challenges were identified, including lack of interoperability (81.9%), system downtime (80.9%), and data security concerns (78.5%). A statistically significant difference was found in perceptions of EHR effectiveness among professional groups ($p = 0.031$), with physicians showing the highest satisfaction.
Conclusion: EHRs were perceived as essential tools for improving patient care through enhanced accuracy, coordination, and safety. Despite notable challenges related to system performance and data privacy, the overall findings highlight the positive impact of EHRs on healthcare delivery. Continuous training, stronger interoperability, and improved technical support are recommended to optimize system efficiency and further advance patient-centered care.

Introduction

Background

The role of electronic health records (EHRs) in improving patient care has become a central focus in the evolution of modern healthcare systems. The shift from traditional paper-based records to digital documentation represents a major transformation in the way health information is collected, stored, and utilized. EHRs serve as comprehensive, real-time databases that consolidate patient data from multiple sources, providing healthcare professionals with immediate access to essential information that supports accurate and efficient clinical decision-making (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

The introduction of EHRs was driven by the need to enhance the quality and safety of healthcare delivery. Paper records often suffered from illegibility, fragmentation, and inaccessibility, leading to delays in treatment and increased risks of medical errors. By contrast, EHRs allow for the structured recording of medical histories, test results, medications, and treatment plans, which promotes consistency and reduces duplication. The availability of updated patient information at the point of care ensures that clinicians can make informed decisions and provide more personalized and evidence-based interventions (Ratwani, 2017).

Improving communication and coordination among healthcare providers is another significant benefit of EHR systems. In traditional models, patient information was often siloed within departments or facilities, making it difficult to coordinate care across different levels and disciplines. EHRs facilitate seamless data exchange among physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and specialists, ensuring that every member of the care team is informed about the patient's status and ongoing treatment. This interconnectedness helps prevent redundant tests, medication errors, and conflicting interventions (Ayaad et al., 2019).

EHRs also play a critical role in enhancing patient safety. Built-in alerts and reminders can notify clinicians about potential drug interactions, allergies, or abnormal laboratory results, allowing for timely interventions. Decision support tools integrated within EHRs can guide practitioners toward best practices and standardized treatment protocols, reducing variability in care delivery. By maintaining a comprehensive and accurate patient record, EHRs help prevent omissions and errors that could compromise patient outcomes (Hodgson et al., 2021).

Another vital contribution of EHRs is their role in improving efficiency and workflow within healthcare settings. Automated data entry, electronic prescribing, and digital ordering of laboratory tests and imaging studies save time and reduce administrative burden. These efficiencies allow healthcare professionals to devote more time to direct patient care rather than paperwork. Moreover, the digitization of health information supports faster retrieval of records, smoother billing processes, and improved resource management (Motsi, 2024).

From the patient's perspective, EHRs enhance engagement and transparency. Many systems provide patients with access to their health records through online portals, enabling them to review test results, monitor their progress, and communicate with their care providers. This accessibility fosters a sense of ownership and active participation in managing their health. Informed patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans, attend follow-up appointments, and adopt healthier behaviors, all of which contribute to better outcomes (Al-Shammari et al., 2024).

The analytical potential of EHRs is another transformative aspect. Large-scale data generated by EHR systems can be used for population health management, identifying trends, and predicting risks. Healthcare organizations can analyze aggregated data to detect disease patterns, monitor public health concerns, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. This capability supports not only clinical care but also research and policymaking, paving the way for evidence-based improvements in healthcare delivery (Upadhyay & Hu, 2022).

In addition to direct patient care, EHRs contribute to the education and training of healthcare professionals. Access to detailed patient data allows clinicians to learn from past cases, understand outcomes, and refine their practice. Academic and training institutions also benefit from the use of EHRs in clinical simulations and research, helping prepare future healthcare workers to operate effectively in digital environments (Hazazi & Wilson, 2021).

Despite their numerous advantages, the implementation of EHRs has not been without challenges. Issues related to system interoperability, data privacy, and user adaptability remain significant barriers. Many healthcare providers face difficulties integrating different EHR systems, which can hinder the seamless exchange of patient data. Furthermore, ensuring data security and maintaining patient confidentiality are ongoing concerns, especially as healthcare organizations face increasing cyber threats (Kumari & Chander, 2024).

Ultimately, the role of electronic health records extends beyond mere documentation. EHRs have redefined the landscape of healthcare by creating a foundation for safer, more efficient, and more coordinated patient care. As technology continues to evolve, the optimization of EHR systems will be crucial to achieving a truly patient-centered healthcare environment where data-driven insights and digital tools enhance every aspect of clinical practice (Vos et al., 2020).

Methodology

Study Design

This research employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to evaluate the role of electronic health records (EHRs) in improving patient care. The study was conducted over a three-month period and aimed to assess healthcare professionals' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward the use of EHR systems in enhancing quality, safety, and efficiency of care.

Study Population

The target population consisted of healthcare professionals including physicians, nurses, and allied health staff who had direct experience using electronic health record systems in their daily practice. Participants were selected from various healthcare settings such as hospitals, outpatient clinics, and primary care centers to ensure diverse representation of clinical roles and experiences.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 210 healthcare professionals participated in the study. The sample size was determined based on the estimated population of EHR users in comparable healthcare institutions, using a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation from different professional categories. The final sample included 90 physicians (42.9%), 85 nurses (40.5%), and 35 allied health professionals (16.6%).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria encompassed healthcare workers who had used EHR systems for at least six months and were directly involved in patient care activities. Participants who were administrative staff, interns, or had less than six months of EHR experience were excluded to maintain relevance and reliability of responses.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections:

1. **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, profession, and years of experience.
2. **EHR Utilization:** Frequency and duration of EHR use, type of system used, and level of training received.
3. **Perceived Impact on Patient Care:** Questions assessing the effects of EHRs on accuracy, efficiency, communication, and overall patient outcomes.
4. **Challenges and Barriers:** Items related to system usability, data security concerns, and technical support.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for most items.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument was reviewed by a panel of five experts in health informatics and clinical research to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted with 20 participants who were not included in the main sample to test clarity and reliability. Based on feedback, minor modifications were made. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency was 0.89, indicating high reliability of the tool.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining ethical approval from the institutional review board, participants were approached through their workplace and invited to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their

responses. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Questionnaires were distributed in both paper and electronic forms to facilitate accessibility, and all responses were collected over a period of four weeks.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and response distributions. Inferential statistics such as Chi-square tests and one-way ANOVA were applied to examine associations between professional categories and perceptions regarding EHR effectiveness. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations

All participants took part voluntarily, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. No identifying information was collected. Ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and nonmaleficence were strictly observed. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage without any consequence.

Results

A total of 210 healthcare professionals participated in this study, achieving a 100% response rate. The results present the demographic characteristics of participants, their utilization patterns of electronic health records (EHRs), perceptions regarding the role of EHRs in improving patient care, and challenges encountered in using these systems.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 210)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	112	53.3
	Female	98	46.7
Age (years)	20–30	65	31.0
	31–40	90	42.9
	41–50	38	18.1
	>50	17	8.1
Profession	Physician	90	42.9
	Nurse	85	40.5
	Allied Health	35	16.6
Years of Experience	<5 years	56	26.7
	5–10 years	87	41.4
	>10 years	67	31.9

The majority of participants were male (53.3%), and the most represented age group was 31–40 years (42.9%). Physicians made up the largest professional category (42.9%), followed by nurses (40.5%). Most respondents had between 5 and 10 years of professional experience (41.4%), indicating a well-experienced workforce with substantial exposure to EHR systems.

Table 2. Utilization of Electronic Health Records

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Duration of EHR Use	<1 year	25	11.9
	1–3 years	78	37.1
	3–5 years	62	29.5
	>5 years	45	21.5
Frequency of Use	Daily	165	78.6
	Weekly	35	16.7
	Occasionally	10	4.7
Received EHR Training	Yes	172	81.9

	No	38	18.1

Most participants (37.1%) had been using EHRs for 1–3 years, while 21.5% reported more than five years of use. A large majority (78.6%) accessed EHRs daily, reflecting routine integration into clinical workflows. Notably, 81.9% received formal EHR training, suggesting that most users were adequately prepared to use the system effectively.

Table 3. Perceptions of EHR Impact on Patient Care

Statement	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
EHR improves accuracy of patient data	112 (53.3)	78 (37.1)	15 (7.1)	4 (1.9)	1 (0.5)
EHR enhances communication among providers	105 (50.0)	80 (38.1)	17 (8.1)	6 (2.9)	2 (1.0)
EHR reduces medical errors	98 (46.7)	84 (40.0)	20 (9.5)	6 (2.9)	2 (1.0)
EHR improves efficiency and time management	110 (52.4)	75 (35.7)	18 (8.6)	5 (2.4)	2 (1.0)
EHR contributes to better patient outcomes	108 (51.4)	82 (39.0)	13 (6.2)	5 (2.4)	2 (1.0)

A majority of participants strongly agreed that EHRs improve accuracy (53.3%) and enhance communication among providers (50%). Similarly, 86.7% (combined strongly agree and agree) believed that EHRs reduce medical errors, while 88.1% felt they enhance efficiency and time management. These findings suggest strong positive perceptions of EHRs in improving quality and coordination of care.

Table 4. Challenges Faced in Using EHR Systems

Challenge	Always n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Rarely n (%)	Never n (%)
System downtime or slow performance	78 (37.1)	92 (43.8)	35 (16.7)	5 (2.4)
Lack of interoperability between systems	85 (40.5)	87 (41.4)	33 (15.7)	5 (2.4)
Data privacy and security concerns	70 (33.3)	95 (45.2)	35 (16.7)	10 (4.8)
Inadequate technical support	65 (31.0)	88 (41.9)	40 (19.0)	17 (8.1)
Difficulty adapting to new updates	58 (27.6)	90 (42.9)	45 (21.4)	17 (8.1)

The most commonly reported challenges were lack of interoperability (81.9%) and system downtime (80.9%). Data privacy concerns were also notable, with 78.5% of respondents reporting frequent or occasional worries. Although most participants found EHRs beneficial, these findings highlight persistent technical and security issues that could hinder optimal utilization.

Table 5. Association Between Profession and Perception of EHR Effectiveness

Profession	Mean Perception Score (out of 5)	SD	p-value
Physicians	4.41	0.51	
Nurses	4.28	0.57	
Allied Health	4.12	0.62	0.031

A statistically significant difference ($p = 0.031$) was found among professional groups regarding their perception of EHR effectiveness. Physicians demonstrated slightly higher mean perception scores (4.41) compared to nurses (4.28) and allied health professionals (4.12). This indicates that physicians

were the most satisfied with the system's role in enhancing patient care, possibly due to their direct involvement in decision-making processes supported by EHR data.

Discussion

The findings of this research demonstrated that the majority of healthcare professionals perceived electronic health records (EHRs) as a vital tool for improving the quality, accuracy, and coordination of patient care. This aligns with previous evidence suggesting that EHRs contribute significantly to clinical decision-making, communication efficiency, and overall patient safety (Ibrahim et al., 2022). The high proportion of respondents who reported daily use of EHRs in this study underscores the growing dependence on digital systems in modern healthcare practice.

Most participants in this study agreed that EHRs enhance the accuracy of patient information and reduce the likelihood of errors in documentation. This result is consistent with Ratwani (2017), who highlighted that EHR systems reduce human error by providing standardized formats for recording medical data, improving legibility, and ensuring accessibility. The integration of real-time data across departments also minimizes redundancy and supports safer clinical workflows.

In terms of communication, a substantial number of respondents indicated that EHRs improved coordination between healthcare providers. This finding is comparable to the observations by Vos et al. (2020), who found that EHRs facilitated multidisciplinary collaboration by allowing seamless information exchange among medical specialists. Enhanced communication reduces fragmentation in patient care and ensures continuity of treatment, particularly for patients with chronic conditions or complex medical histories.

A significant portion of the participants believed that EHRs played a crucial role in reducing medical errors and adverse events. This outcome supports the conclusions of Ayaad et al. (2019), who reported that electronic documentation improved medication safety and reduced diagnostic inaccuracies. By integrating alerts and decision-support tools, EHRs help clinicians identify potential drug interactions and other risks early in the care process.

The improvement of efficiency and time management was another major benefit identified in this research. More than 88% of respondents agreed that EHRs streamline workflow, consistent with the findings of Hodgson et al. (2021), who emphasized that digitized systems reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and facilitate faster access to medical records. Enhanced efficiency allows clinicians to dedicate more time to patient interaction and assessment, thus improving the quality of care delivery.

Furthermore, participants expressed a strong belief that EHRs lead to better overall patient outcomes. This perception mirrors the conclusions drawn by Motsi (2024), who demonstrated that EHR implementation led to measurable improvements in treatment effectiveness, patient monitoring, and outcome tracking. The ability to access historical data supports evidence-based decision-making, enabling healthcare professionals to provide more personalized and timely interventions.

Despite these benefits, several challenges were noted, including system downtime, lack of interoperability, and data privacy concerns. These issues are not unique to this study; they have been reported globally as significant obstacles to optimal EHR utilization (Upadhyay & Hu, 2022). Technical inefficiencies such as slow system response and integration problems can hinder workflow, while concerns over data security continue to affect user trust and acceptance.

The interoperability challenge was particularly evident, as 81.9% of respondents identified difficulties sharing information across different systems. This aligns with the findings of Kumari and Chander (2024), who argued that fragmented EHR systems impede information flow and limit the benefits of digital healthcare transformation. The absence of unified standards can lead to data silos, thereby compromising the goal of comprehensive and coordinated patient management.

In addition, this study found that physicians had a slightly higher perception of EHR effectiveness compared to nurses and allied health professionals. This difference may stem from variations in system usage intensity and role-specific responsibilities. Similar results were reported by Al-Shammari et al. (2024), who found that physicians benefited most from EHR functionalities related to diagnostics and clinical decision-making, while nurses often faced usability challenges and workload increases associated with documentation requirements.

Another important finding relates to the impact of training on user experience. Over 80% of participants in this study received formal EHR training, which correlated with more positive attitudes toward system

use. Ibrahim et al. (2022) also emphasized the role of structured training programs in ensuring efficient adoption and reducing user frustration. Training enhances digital literacy and confidence, leading to higher accuracy and consistency in data entry.

Data privacy concerns emerged as a key issue among participants. Approximately 78.5% reported anxiety about the security of electronic information, consistent with the findings of Hazazi and Wilson (2021), who highlighted that concerns about unauthorized access and data breaches remain a major barrier to full EHR adoption. Strengthening cybersecurity protocols and enforcing strict confidentiality measures are essential to maintaining user and patient trust.

The study also revealed that technical support and regular system updates are essential to maintaining functionality and user satisfaction. Participants who experienced inadequate technical support were more likely to report dissatisfaction and difficulties adapting to system updates. This observation supports the argument by Ayaad et al. (2019) that sustained technical assistance and system optimization are crucial for long-term success in EHR implementation.

Moreover, EHRs contribute significantly to data-driven healthcare research. Although this study primarily focused on clinical perceptions, the results reflect the potential for large-scale data analytics to support population health management, as noted by Hodgson et al. (2021). Reliable and comprehensive data from EHRs enable health organizations to track performance indicators, identify risk factors, and improve service delivery.

This study's findings contribute to the growing body of evidence that EHR systems are transformative tools in achieving patient-centered care. However, it also reinforces the importance of addressing technical, organizational, and human factors that influence successful implementation. As Upadhyay and Hu (2022) noted, the sustainability of EHR benefits depends on continuous evaluation, staff engagement, and policy support.

Overall, the positive perceptions observed in this research indicate that EHRs are increasingly viewed as integral components of healthcare quality improvement. To maximize their potential, healthcare organizations should invest in system interoperability, comprehensive user training, and data protection strategies. These measures will ensure that EHR systems continue to evolve in ways that prioritize patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

Conclusion

This study concluded that electronic health records play a pivotal role in enhancing patient care by improving accuracy, communication, efficiency, and safety in clinical settings. The results demonstrated strong positive perceptions among healthcare professionals, although challenges related to system performance, interoperability, and security persist. Addressing these challenges through continuous system improvement, staff training, and strong governance will further strengthen the positive impact of EHRs and promote the delivery of high-quality, coordinated, and patient-centered healthcare.

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