Guiding principles for the optimal use of data analytics by physicians at the point of care

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Executive Summary

Electronic records are now being seen more widely as a routine tool in patient care. A majority of physicians in Canada now regularly access electronic health information (EHI) for purposes of clinical work and decision making. This information includes information about the patient’s current medication, allergies, and medical history. Physicians are in a unique position to use this information to enhance patient care. This can be accomplished through intelligent data analytics that provide physicians with the appropriate information at the point of care, so that they can make evidence-based decisions.

However, access to EHI is not only required to enhance patient care. In order to maintain the highest standards of care, physicians must also ensure that information is accessed, used, and interpreted appropriately.

Policy

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) supports the use of data analytics by physicians at the point of care to enhance patient care. However, the use of such analytics must be guided by principles that ensure that the information is used appropriately, in a manner that respects patient privacy and confidentiality.

The CMA recommends that:

1. Access to EHI should be restricted to healthcare providers who have a legitimate reason for accessing the information.
2. Physicians should be provided with the tools and training necessary to use data analytics effectively.
3. Physicians should be encouraged to use data analytics to enhance patient care by sharing best practices and promoting evidence-based decision making.
4. The CMA should work with other stakeholders to develop guidelines for the appropriate use of data analytics in healthcare.

Conclusion

Data analytics have the potential to enhance patient care by providing physicians with the appropriate information at the point of care. However, it is essential that the use of such analytics be guided by principles that ensure that the information is used appropriately, in a manner that respects patient privacy and confidentiality.