

Implementation of Electronic Patient Records

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ABSTRACT

My PhD research explores the process of implementation of electronic patient records now termed NHS Care Records Service NCRS (NHSIA 2004). It investigates the realization of the UK NHS National Strategy (Npfit which is the National Programme for Information Technology which is designed to improve the care provided to NHS patients.

The NHS' Care Records Service (NCRS) incorporates concepts of both the organization-specific EPR and also the 'cradle-to-grave' Electronic Health Record (EHR) (NHS 1998). EPR or NCRS offers a technological benefit in health delivery that is broader than narrow clinical application. Evaluation of the success of the NPfIT, as with many healthcare IT projects, would be difficult and it does not help that government led IT projects in the NHS have a history of notable project failures. The complexity of such huge investments, currently £7.6 billion (NHSIA 2004) calls for a clear understanding of the environments in which healthcare networks exist.

In detail the research explores, compares and evaluates contrasting Local level Strategies in Essex and Cambridge counties. To give the research more focus the issues of policy making at a National Level and how the Local level Strategy leads to implementation of the electronic data spine by December 2004 which is part of the NCRS system. The electronic data spine is one of the elements of NCRS which will contain up-to date patient demographic, encounter and summarised clinical data.

The research work so far undertaken includes extensive literature reviews, NHS documentation, and interviews with individual managerial and IS&T professionals within Essex and Cambridge counties. These will be supplemented with emails and observations of board meetings.

The research will report findings through an extensive ANT analysis. The aim of the study so far has been to get a clear understanding of NCRS domain by use of Actor Network Theory lens as a conceptual framework. The utility of using such a framework is reviewed as an effective "socio-technical" analysis tool. The validity of this has been explored and it's use complimented with theories like that of Stake-holder and Roger's Innovation diffusion theory. We argue so far that the use of ANT analysis in the NCRS UK NHS environment can provide vision of what the future will hold for NCRS when this actor network comes into being. This ANT lens will look at organisational /IS actors and how that integrates together and the role of NCRS within the new emergent network. If the theory can be successfully used for analysis in an environment such as the NCRS implementation process, then the findings may also have implications for how Information Management and Strategy Groups think about implementation in general of the futuristic Electronic Patient Record System.