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Strategic Interoperability in Germany Spain and the UK: The Clinical and Business Imperative for Healthcare Organisations

Strategic interoperability —The key to connected care

Introduction

The aging population and increasing incidence of chronic diseases are putting unmanageable pressures on healthcare services, not just in Europe, but worldwide. The current models of healthcare are unsustainable in the face of increased demand for services and rising costs. This was evident even before the financial crisis led to severe cuts in healthcare budgets in many countries.

Patients are increasingly relying on multiple specialists and healthcare organisations for treatment, due to the complexity of their medical conditions and the healthcare delivery system itself. Care providers need accurate, up-to-date, and reliable information from a complete patient record to deliver safe, high-quality care. Today 's model, with its silos of care and multiple unconnected records, is no longer suitable: systems and organisations need to be interoperable. This means that healthcare organisations must look at interoperability from a strategic point of view so that information is available when and where it 's needed across the continuum of care. Health and social care organisations will have to adapt to the changing environment in order to provide the best care for patients — and to survive financially.

The Royal College of Physicians in England produced a 2013 report called The Future Hospital: Caring for Medical Patients, in which it outlined a new model and role for hospitals: “ Conventional models of health service design, in which a hospital site is the sole focus for the delivery of emergency, acute and elective services, are dated. These models often lack the integration, collaboration, communication and information sharing across hospital and the healthcare settings necessary to effectively meet patient needs and provide streamlined and seamless care. ”

The report recommends fundamental changes in the way hospitals organise and deliver care, along with new ways of working that span medical teams, hospital wards, and service providers across hospitals and community-based care organisations. According to the report 's findings, integrated workflows, shared outcomes, and real-time communication of information among such health and social services partners will become the norm.

This is the vision of patient-centric care — care that is designed around the needs of the patient rather than the disease, treatment, service, or organisation in which the patient is seen — and it is applicable to any healthcare system.

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