The Reality of Electronic Health Records Implementation – Health Policy Analysis

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Issues: Identified in both the Romanow Commission and the Kirby Committee reports, Electronic Health Record (EHR) has been considered as part of health care accountability and sustainability solution. However, in the reality of EHR implementation, there are many political issues, such as privacy, standards, governance, collaborations, funding, human resources and interests group. Realizing and solving these political issues properly are important to succeed in EHR implementation.

Data and methods: Data for this analysis include Canadian Institute for Health Information 2003 and 2004 reports, the Romanow and Kirby reports, the First Ministers' Accord 2003 and the 10-year plan, as well as information from specific eHealth organizations and professional medical associations. To deeply analyze issues of EHR implementation, the analysis methods are based on the three elements of policy tools (ideas, institutions, and interests). Ideas are about people's thought. Institutions consist of governance, jurisdiction, organizations, funding, resource allocation, health care delivery methods, constitutions, bills and acts. Interests refer to how organized groups influence policy making to promote their own interests by using their power.

Analysis: The ideas of EHR are to benefit Canadian. EHR should improve health care efficiency via sharing information and enabling patients to access health care conveniently. However, the privacy issues have to be solved. From institutions perspective, health care is under provincial jurisdiction. Mainly funded by the federal government, most provinces are implementing EHR independently. Therefore, issues emerged, such as no standards, multi-governance, insufficient collaborations, funding and human resources. Furthermore, interests groups (healthcare professionals) play a key role in EHR implementation. They are trusted by patients to handle their records. EHR implementation may potentially shift power away from providers to managers and bureaucrats.

Conclusion: Knowing those political issues around EHR implementation will help us to find proper solutions to solve the problems and speed up the implementation, and eventually enable EHR bring benefits to Canadian.