





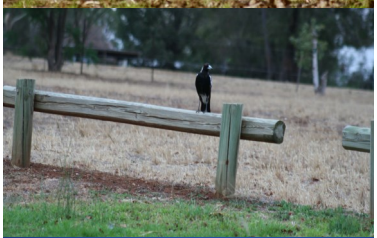


Foresight instead of hindsight: An ideal model for designing an Electronic Health Record System for contemporary occupational therapy practice

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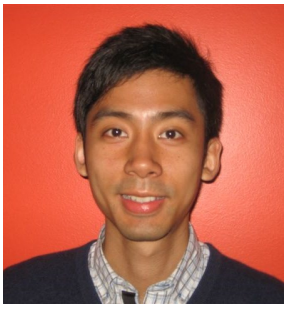
In the Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSWLHD) and the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD), clinical occupational therapists (OTs) are currently using a mix of electronic and paper based systems for clinical information management. This study aims to review the current clinical information management systems utilised by Occupational Therapists, and postulate a model which outlines the features of an ideal universal Electronic Health Record (EHR) System that complements current electronic medical record (EMR) systems to meet the evolving needs of contemporary occupational therapy (OT) practice.

A qualitative study framework using appreciative inquiry methodology was selected for this study. Three focus groups were conducted with twelve clinical OTs working in multiple sites across NNSWLHD and MNCLHD. Transcripts of these focus groups were manually coded and analysed to identify shared ideas and common themes.

Abstracted from the response of the study participants, current OT clinical information recording and sharing systems are found to be working in a hypothesised linear gear model (LGM). The LGM systems are more advanced than conventional paper based systems as it offers greater reliability of information delivery, easier access to medical information and better monitoring of clinical activity levels. Nevertheless, it would benefit of further upgrade to address the needs for evidence-based and client-centred practice for contemporary OT practice. Based on the suggestions provided by the participants, an ideal universal EHR system designed in a hypothesised centralised gear model (CGM) is likely to bring numerous benefits to clinicians, patients and LHDs although it is still unclear how to address the technical, resource and confidentiality barriers for the development of an EHR system.

The findings of this study suggest an upgrade of the current medical information record system of LGM to a health information record system of CGM to improve the accessibility to comprehensive health information including environmental and functional information for clinical OTs across all settings. It is important for policy makers and program developers to take into account of the CGM when upgrades current EMR systems to better address OTs' clinical needs. Further studies to test and validate the hypothesised CGM for its impact on OTs and across a multidisciplinary team will be required. Future research to extend the findings to include the opinion of OTs working in other rural and metropolitan areas will better reflect the collective views of the broader OT community regarding this topic.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'



Nick is an occupational therapist working in Tweed-Byron service group. He has an undergraduate medical degree in China and a postgraduate occupational therapy degree from the University of Sydney. With a strong interest in IT technology, Nick is enthusiastic and passionate about applying modern IT technology in improving the quality and efficiency of clinical service.

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