

A Comment on Computerized Medical Records – An Unnecessary, Expensive Concept that is being Foisted Upon Patients and the Medical Community

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As a physician who has practiced medicine for 55 years I cannot resist sharing with my patients, colleagues, and hospitals my opinion that computerized medical records are an inherently dishonest concept that is being foisted upon us that is adding literally millions to the cost of medical care in the United States. They are dishonest because much of what is said to have been done in the records is not being done, or if it is being done, it is not being done by physicians.

We all know that the detailed history and physical exam being appended to the medical record could not be done in the time allotted to the patient in a busy medical practice.

This will become apparent if patients ask their physicians whether they have done everything checked on their computerized medical records. A further pertinent question is “would you prefer to spend the time it takes to complete a computerized medical record rather than have during that time an eye to eye contact with the patient and on a physical examination.

Much has been made of the value of having each patient’s medical record available on request to a new doctor and to an emergency room. Would not the same purpose be served if every time a laboratory test was done in a doctor’s office that a copy of the results was provided to the patient along with a note from his doctor. Copies of hospital studies are readily available in the records of the apartments that did them. In addition, copies of discharge summaries regarding hospitalizations could be sent to each patient. Other questions that patients might want to ask their physicians are: “How valuable to them are the computerized record reports that you receive from other physicians? Or do you just look at the summary paragraph.”

“As mentioned above would you rather spend the time you spend on check sheets on eye to eye contact and a more thorough history and physical examination in which you would record only the positives”

Is it too late to stop the mad rush to computerized medical records and substitute for them more time with each patient? I do not know. However, it is my hope that all concerned will realize that computerized medical records are an unnecessary addition to medical care. I hope that if these records are “junked” that a reasonable more simple medical record will be adopted. Substituted for the computerized medical record will be a system that includes only the essentials in which gives physicians credit for doing what is necessary without additional documentation.

Computerized medical records have caused emergency rooms and busy practitioners to reduce their output by at least 20% and in addition physicians are hiring personnel to sit in on their examinations because of these computerized medical records. Because of the factors mentioned above the medical and Government establishments may take another look at computerized medical records and decide they're raising the cost of medical care and decreasing its efficiency.