
NHS England barriers to interoperability



A new report has identified key barriers to increased interoperability in NHS England, including inadequate technical and clinical standards as well as unwillingness to share data.

Although a substantial amount of patient data is being shared within the NHS – mostly via 61 local shared records across England – much of this sharing is limited in breadth and cumbersome in nature since it falls outside of the clinician workflow, reports KLAS Research.

NHS England's Five-Year Forward View and the National Information Board's response have thrust interoperable systems into the national spotlight in England, including the development of a Local Health and Care Record Exemplar programme. This report represents KLAS' first look at interoperability within the NHS.

Blocks to healthcare interoperability

KLAS researchers noted that interoperability is hindered by multiple factors – i.e., market, supplier and internal barriers. Market barriers include insufficient technical and clinical standards, lack of patient education or willingness to share, lack of clarity on information governance, and lack of understanding of disparate care settings among care providers.

On the part of vendors or suppliers, the report cites unwillingness to enable data sharing as a major issue, as well as lack of supplier resources and/or expertise, poor quality or missing interoperability tools (e.g., inability to share structured data), pricing model, and inability to accurately match patient records.

Internal barriers include lack of strategy or interoperability road map, lack of resources/expertise, internal data-sharing difficulties, clinician unwillingness to adopt tools, and unwillingness to share data, according to the report.

"Interoperability is critical to providing consistent, high-quality care throughout NHS England," said Jeremy Goff of KLAS, a co-author of the report. "We believe this report will help spur improvements and serve as a benchmark for evaluating future progress."

Interoperability road map

Rachel Dunscombe, CIO at Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust, commented on the report: "While people may be happy with the solutions [for interoperability] today, consulting the solution road map will allow them to see if their vendors are moving towards the interoperability standards needed to support future requirements."

KLAS said 141 individuals at 124 unique organisations across England participated in the research. These 141 individuals provided insights into care records and interoperability across 149 unique care settings and numerous care records/EPRs.

Source: KLAS Research
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