

Steps towards the Development of National Health Data Standards in Developing Countries

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Abstract : The proliferation of health data standards today is somewhat overlapping and conflicting, resulting in market confusion and leading to increasing proprietary interests. The government role and support in standardization for health data are thought to be crucial in order to establish credible standards for the next decade, to maximize interoperability across the health sector, and to decrease the risks associated with the implementation of non-standard systems. The normative literature missed out the exploration of the different steps required to be undertaken by the government towards the development of national health data standards. Based on the lessons learned from a qualitative study investigating the different issues to the adoption of health data standards in the major tertiary hospitals in Saudi Arabia and the opinions and feedback from different experts in the areas of data exchange and standards and medical informatics in Saudi Arabia and UK, a list of steps required towards the development of national health data standards was constructed. Main steps are the existence of: a national formal reference for health data standards, an agreed national strategic direction for medical data exchange, a national medical information management plan and a national accreditation body, and more important is the change management at the national and organizational level. The outcome of this study can be used by academics and practitioners to develop the planning of health data standards, and in particular those in developing countries.

Keywords : interoperability, medical data exchange, health data standards, case study, Saudi Arabia

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