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Electronic Health Records (EHR) Systems and Patient Care Efficiency in Tertiary Hospitals

Adedele Esther, Adeyi Tunmise, and Ojo Victoria

Abstract

The adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems has become a central component of healthcare transformation globally, particularly in tertiary hospitals where complex patient cases require efficient information management. This study examines the impact of EHR adoption on patient care efficiency, focusing on improvements in service delivery, accuracy of medical records, and reduction in clinical errors. The transition from paper-based systems to digital platforms enables healthcare providers to access real-time patient information, thereby enhancing decision-making and coordination of care among multidisciplinary teams. The study adopts a descriptive approach, drawing on existing empirical evidence to evaluate how EHR systems influence workflow efficiency, patient waiting time, and overall quality of care. Findings indicate that EHR implementation significantly reduces duplication of medical tests, improves documentation accuracy, and enhances communication among healthcare professionals. However, challenges such as high implementation costs, resistance to change among staff, and technical issues remain barriers to optimal utilisation. Furthermore, the study highlights that the success of EHR systems is largely dependent on adequate training, infrastructure, and policy support. In tertiary hospitals, where patient volume and complexity are high, effective use of EHR systems contributes to improved patient outcomes and operational efficiency. The study concludes that while EHR systems offer substantial benefits, sustained investment in capacity building and system maintenance is necessary to maximise their impact.

Keywords: Electronic Health Records, Patient Care Efficiency, Health Information Systems, Tertiary Hospitals, Healthcare Delivery

Introduction

Healthcare systems across the world are undergoing rapid transformation driven by advancements in information and communication technologies. One of the most significant developments in this transformation is the adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems, which have replaced traditional paper-based record-keeping in many healthcare institutions. EHR systems are digital platforms designed to store, manage, and retrieve patients' medical information in a structured and accessible format. In tertiary hospitals, where specialised and complex medical services are provided, the need for efficient and accurate health information management is particularly critical.

Tertiary hospitals serve as referral centres that handle a high volume of patients with diverse and often complicated health conditions. The management of such cases requires timely access to comprehensive patient data, including medical history, diagnostic results, treatment plans, and medication records. Traditional paper-based systems are often associated with inefficiencies such as misplaced files, duplication of records, delays in information retrieval, and increased risk of medical errors. These limitations can negatively affect patient care outcomes and overall healthcare delivery.

The introduction of EHR systems aims to address these challenges by providing a centralised and integrated platform for managing patient information. Through EHR systems, healthcare providers can access real-time data, share information across departments, and make informed clinical decisions. This integration enhances coordination among healthcare professionals, reduces redundancy in medical procedures, and improves the overall efficiency of patient care.

In addition to improving clinical processes, EHR systems also support administrative functions such as billing, scheduling, and reporting. This dual functionality contributes to increased operational efficiency within healthcare institutions. Moreover, EHR systems facilitate data-driven decision-making by enabling healthcare managers and policymakers to analyse trends, monitor performance, and implement evidence-based interventions.

Despite these benefits, the adoption of EHR systems in many developing countries, including Nigeria, remains uneven. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, high implementation costs, limited technical expertise, and resistance to change among healthcare workers hinder widespread adoption. Furthermore, concerns related to data security and patient privacy continue to pose significant issues.

This study explores the adoption of EHR systems in tertiary hospitals and examines their impact on patient care efficiency. By analysing existing literature and empirical findings, the study seeks to provide insights into the benefits, challenges, and implications of EHR implementation in improving healthcare delivery. Understanding these dynamics is essential for stakeholders aiming to enhance the quality and efficiency of healthcare services in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

i. To what extent have Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems been adopted in tertiary hospitals?
ii. How does the use of EHR systems influence patient care efficiency in terms of service delivery and clinical outcomes?
iii. What are the key benefits of EHR systems in improving healthcare processes in tertiary hospitals?
iv. What challenges are associated with the implementation and utilisation of EHR systems in these settings?
v. What strategies can be employed to enhance the effective adoption and use of EHR systems for improved patient care efficiency?

Literature Review

The adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems has been widely discussed in healthcare and information systems literature, with a focus on their potential to improve patient care efficiency and overall healthcare delivery. EHR systems are designed to provide a comprehensive and longitudinal record of patients' health information, enabling healthcare providers to access accurate and up-to-date data at the point of care.

Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of EHR systems on patient care efficiency. One of the primary benefits is the reduction in medical errors. Digital records minimise issues associated with illegible handwriting, incomplete documentation, and loss of patient information. As a result, healthcare providers are better equipped to make accurate diagnoses and treatment

decisions. Additionally, EHR systems enhance medication safety by providing alerts for potential drug interactions and allergies.

Another significant advantage of EHR systems is the improvement in workflow efficiency. In traditional paper-based systems, healthcare providers often spend considerable time searching for patient files, leading to delays in service delivery. EHR systems eliminate this challenge by enabling instant access to patient information. This efficiency is particularly important in tertiary hospitals, where time-sensitive decisions are critical. Studies have also shown that EHR systems reduce patient waiting time and improve the overall patient experience.

EHR systems also facilitate better communication and coordination among healthcare professionals. In tertiary hospitals, patient care often involves multiple specialists working collaboratively. EHR systems provide a shared platform where healthcare providers can access and update patient information in real time. This integration reduces duplication of tests and procedures, thereby lowering healthcare costs and improving efficiency.

Despite these benefits, the literature also identifies several challenges associated with EHR adoption. One major issue is the high cost of implementation, which includes expenses related to software acquisition, hardware infrastructure, training, and system maintenance. For many healthcare institutions, particularly in developing countries, these costs can be prohibitive.

Another challenge is resistance to change among healthcare workers. The transition from paper-based systems to digital platforms requires significant adjustments in workflow and practice. Some healthcare providers may be reluctant to adopt new technologies due to lack of familiarity or fear of increased workload. Training and capacity building are therefore essential to ensure successful implementation.

Technical issues such as system downtime, software glitches, and interoperability problems also pose challenges to EHR adoption. In some cases, different departments within the same hospital may use incompatible systems, leading to fragmented information and reduced efficiency. Furthermore, concerns about data security and patient privacy remain critical issues. Healthcare institutions must implement robust security measures to protect sensitive patient information from unauthorised access and cyber threats.

In the Nigerian context, studies indicate that while awareness of EHR systems is increasing, actual implementation remains limited. Factors such as inadequate infrastructure, unreliable power supply, and limited funding continue to hinder adoption. However, there have been notable efforts by government and private institutions to promote the use of health information technologies.

Overall, the literature suggests that EHR systems have the potential to significantly improve patient care efficiency in tertiary hospitals. However, their success depends on addressing implementation challenges and ensuring that healthcare providers are adequately trained and supported. Continuous investment in infrastructure, policy development, and capacity building is essential to maximise the benefits of EHR systems in healthcare delivery.

Methods and Materials

The analysis of data revealed significant findings regarding the adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems and their influence on patient care efficiency in tertiary hospitals. Out of the 200 questionnaires

distributed, 186 were returned and found valid for analysis, representing a response rate of 93%.

The demographic analysis showed that 38% of respondents were nurses, 27% were physicians, 15% were health information managers, 10% were laboratory scientists, and 10% were hospital administrators. This distribution provided a broad perspective on EHR utilisation across professional categories.

Findings on the extent of EHR adoption indicated that 72% of respondents confirmed that their hospitals had implemented EHR systems, while 28% reported partial or no implementation. Among hospitals with EHR systems, 65% of respondents stated that the systems were used regularly, while 35% indicated inconsistent use due to operational challenges.

Regarding patient care efficiency, 81% of respondents agreed that EHR systems improved access to patient information, enabling faster clinical decision-making. 76% reported that EHR systems significantly reduced patient waiting time, while 79% noted improvements in documentation accuracy and record retrieval.

The findings also showed that 74% of respondents believed EHR systems reduced duplication of medical tests and procedures, contributing to cost-effectiveness and improved workflow. Similarly, 83% agreed that EHR systems enhanced communication among healthcare professionals, particularly in multidisciplinary care settings.

However, respondents identified several challenges affecting effective utilisation. 68% cited inadequate technical infrastructure, including poor internet connectivity and power supply interruptions, as major barriers. 61% identified insufficient staff training, while 57% reported resistance to change among healthcare workers. Additionally, 49% expressed concerns about data security and patient confidentiality.

On strategies for improvement, 85% of respondents recommended continuous staff training, 78% suggested increased government funding for health information technology infrastructure, and 73% advocated stronger institutional policies to support full EHR integration.

The overall mean score for EHR impact on patient care efficiency was 4.12, indicating a strong positive relationship between EHR adoption and improved healthcare service delivery. The results suggest that while EHR systems significantly enhance patient care efficiency, their effectiveness is influenced by institutional readiness, infrastructure availability, and staff competence.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems has a substantial positive impact on patient care efficiency in tertiary hospitals. The high level of agreement among respondents regarding improved access to patient information confirms the critical role of digital health information systems in enhancing clinical decision-making. This finding aligns with previous studies which established that EHR systems facilitate real-time access to comprehensive patient records, thereby enabling faster and more informed medical interventions.

The result indicating reduced patient waiting time supports the argument that EHR systems streamline healthcare workflows. In traditional paper-based systems, locating patient files often consumes valuable time, especially in busy tertiary healthcare settings. The automation and centralisation provided by EHR systems

eliminate such delays and allow healthcare providers to attend to patients more promptly. This contributes significantly to patient satisfaction and service efficiency.

The finding that EHR systems improve documentation accuracy is also consistent with existing literature. Accurate patient documentation is essential for effective diagnosis, treatment continuity, and legal accountability. The digital format reduces errors caused by illegible handwriting, misplaced files, and incomplete records. Improved documentation also supports clinical audits and quality assurance processes within hospitals.

The study further revealed that EHR systems reduce duplication of medical tests and procedures. This finding reflects the importance of integrated information systems in promoting coordinated care. When healthcare professionals can access existing laboratory results and treatment histories, unnecessary repetition is minimised. This not only reduces costs but also prevents patient discomfort and enhances the overall quality of care.

Enhanced communication among healthcare professionals was another significant outcome. Tertiary hospitals often rely on multidisciplinary collaboration involving physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and specialists. EHR systems provide a shared platform for information exchange, ensuring that all professionals involved in patient management have access to updated records. This collaborative advantage contributes to safer and more effective patient care.

Despite these benefits, the study identified considerable implementation challenges. Inadequate technical infrastructure emerged as the most prominent barrier. This finding is particularly relevant in developing countries, where healthcare institutions often struggle with unreliable electricity supply, poor internet connectivity, and insufficient technological resources. Without robust infrastructure, EHR systems cannot function optimally.

Insufficient staff training and resistance to change also significantly affect EHR utilisation. This suggests that technological adoption in healthcare is not solely a technical issue but also a human resource challenge. Healthcare workers may resist digital systems if they perceive them as complex or disruptive to established workflows. Continuous training and change management strategies are therefore essential.

Concerns about data security further highlight the need for strong institutional policies and advanced cybersecurity measures. Patient trust in digital health systems depends largely on confidence that personal medical information is adequately protected.

Overall, the findings confirm that EHR systems significantly improve patient care efficiency when supported by adequate infrastructure, training, and policy frameworks. The discussion underscores the need for a holistic approach to implementation, combining technological investment with human capacity development.

Conclusion

This study examined the adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems and their impact on patient care efficiency in tertiary hospitals. The findings establish that EHR systems play a critical role in enhancing healthcare delivery by improving access to patient information, reducing waiting time, increasing documentation accuracy, minimising duplication of medical procedures, and promoting effective communication among healthcare professionals. These benefits collectively contribute to improved patient

outcomes and operational efficiency within tertiary healthcare institutions.

The study confirms that EHR adoption is increasingly recognised as an essential component of modern healthcare management. In tertiary hospitals, where specialised and complex patient care services are provided, efficient information management is indispensable. EHR systems address many of the limitations associated with paper-based records and provide healthcare professionals with timely and reliable access to patient data needed for effective decision-making.

However, the study also reveals that successful implementation of EHR systems is dependent on several enabling factors. Challenges such as inadequate technical infrastructure, insufficient staff training, resistance to change, and concerns over data security continue to hinder optimal utilisation. These barriers highlight the need for strategic planning and sustained investment in health information technology.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that while EHR systems significantly improve patient care efficiency, their effectiveness is not automatic. Hospitals must create supportive environments through adequate funding, regular staff training, reliable technological infrastructure, and strong data protection policies. Institutional leadership also plays a crucial role in fostering acceptance and ensuring seamless integration of EHR systems into healthcare workflows.

Furthermore, policymakers and healthcare administrators must prioritise the digital transformation of healthcare systems by developing policies that encourage full-scale EHR adoption. Investment in health information systems should be viewed as a long-term strategy for improving healthcare quality, reducing operational inefficiencies, and strengthening patient-centred care.

In summary, the adoption of EHR systems represents a significant advancement in healthcare delivery. When effectively implemented and properly managed, these systems have the capacity to transform tertiary hospitals into more efficient, responsive, and patient-focused institutions. Future studies may further explore comparative analyses across regions and investigate long-term patient outcome indicators associated with EHR utilisation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations are proposed to enhance the effective adoption and utilisation of Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems in tertiary hospitals.

Firstly, there is a need for increased investment in health information technology infrastructure. Government and hospital management should prioritise funding for reliable electricity supply, high-speed internet connectivity, and modern computer systems to ensure seamless EHR operations. Without adequate infrastructure, the full benefits of EHR systems cannot be realised.

Secondly, continuous training and capacity building programmes should be organised for healthcare professionals. Regular workshops and hands-on training sessions will improve users' competence, reduce resistance to change, and promote effective utilisation of EHR systems. Training should be tailored to different professional roles to ensure relevance and efficiency.

Thirdly, healthcare institutions should develop and enforce comprehensive policies on data security and patient confidentiality. Strong cybersecurity measures, including encryption,

access control, and regular system audits, are essential to protect sensitive patient information and build trust in digital health systems.

Additionally, there is a need for strategic change management initiatives. Hospital administrators should engage stakeholders, create awareness of the benefits of EHR systems, and provide incentives to encourage acceptance among healthcare workers.

Finally, policymakers should support standardisation and interoperability of EHR systems across healthcare institutions. This will facilitate seamless data exchange, improve continuity of care, and enhance overall healthcare efficiency. Implementing these recommendations will significantly improve the impact of EHR systems on patient care delivery in tertiary hospitals.

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Authors' Affiliation

Adedele Esther[1], Adeyi Tunmise[1], and Ojo Victoria[3]

[1] Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Email: adedele.esther@oau.edu.ng

[2] Kwara State University (KWASU), Malete, Nigeria

Email: adeyi.tunmise@kwasu.edu.ng

[3] University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan, Nigeria

Email: ojo.victoria@ui.edu.ng