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Abstract

General practice Electronic Medical Record (EMR) data: exploring patient and healthcare practitioner activity from 2019 to 2021

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Abstract

Introduction: General practice (GP) in Ireland is almost entirely computerised. Computerised records hold great potential for large-scale data analyses but existing software packages do not readily provide such analyses. For a profession facing considerable workforce and workload challenges, harnessing GP electronic medical record (EMR) data can facilitate critical analysis of general practice activity and can highlight important trends for service planning.

Methods: Medical students in the ULEARN network of general practices using the GP EMR 'Socrates' in the Midwest region of Ireland supplied our research team with three reports on consulting and prescribing activity from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021. The three reports, anonymised on site using custom software, detailed chart activity (i.e. types of notes recorded in patient charts), consultation types and headline prescribing figures.

Results: Preliminary analyses of data from these sites reveal that while consultation activity faltered in the early stages of the pandemic, telephone consultations and prescribing continued apace. Interestingly, childhood vaccination appointments did not falter, whereas cervical smears, which were not allowed due to processing laboratory constraints, stopped for many months of the pandemic. There are differences between how different doctors in different practices record consultation types, which weakens some analyses, particularly when estimating face-to-face consultation rates.

Discussion: GP EMR data have great potential for highlighting workforce and workload pressures being experienced by Irish general practitioners and GP nurses. Small modifications to how information is recorded by clinical staff would further strengthen analyses.