Abstract

Introduction: Although Digital Health concept is new to Sri Lanka, components of Health Information Technology has been in practice for almost a decade. Compared to the paper base era, there has been significant improvements in efficiency of service delivery within this period. In spite of the increased efficiency, there has not been any major improvements made upon user feedbacks on the existing Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems. Generally, the Outdoor Patient Departments and Clinics of state hospitals are hectic and congested regardless of the grade of health institution. The clinicians find it challenging to provide quality care for the ever-increasing number of service recipients due to limited time and resources. To maximize the service outcome, it warrants to investigate drawbacks of the existing workflow from patient consultation up to drug dispense through EMR. This research investigates on features and facilities available in EMR systems to further reinforce elements that makes workflow efficient while identifying drawbacks to address existing inaccuracies.

Objectives: To study the existing prescription module to improve efficiency, accuracy and to streamline knowledge on drug prescribing within Electronic Medical Records by proposing suggestions for improvements.

Methodology: The study was conducted as a mix research method. A sample of 67 clinicians from 4 state hospitals contributed by answering a questionnaire. Focused group interviews were conducted among pharmacists of the same hospitals. Expert clinical opinion was sought from Consultant Pharmacologists to rationalise certain prescribing practices by clinicians.

Results: 45 (67%) of 67 participants rated the existing EMR systems to be "good" or above. Majority of participants appreciates certain features and facilities of the EMR compared to the old paper-based system. The qualitative study revealed that certain facilities and features of EMR are underutilized causing undue delays in workflow. Certain practices of clinicians within EMR were justified as well as contradicted by pharmacological experts who contributed to the study.

Conclusion: Despite a few drawbacks, EMR users had a positive perspective about EMR. There were good practices inherent by both Electronic Medical Records where integrating knowledge may lead to better user experience resulting in definite improvements of efficiency and service outcome.