



Electronic Health Record (EHR) – Syndromic Surveillance

Study: EHRs Could Help Physicians Decide When To Prescribe Antibiotics

Wednesday, August 08, 2012 – Using electronic health record systems for disease surveillance could help physicians determine when it is appropriate to prescribe antibiotics, [according to a study](#) published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, [Reuters](#) reports.

Study Details:

Researchers from NorthShore University HealthSystem in Evanston, Ill., used EHRs to review data on 28,000 patients. Each of the patients saw one of 69 physicians at NorthShore clinics and hospitals during influenza seasons between 2006 and 2011.

Key Findings:

- Physicians on average prescribed antibiotics 45% of the time for patients complaining of a fever and cough or cold symptoms.
- The rate of antibiotic prescriptions issued varied widely by physician, with doctors prescribing antibiotics between 18% and 84% of the time, the study found.
- Researchers noted that physicians often prescribed antibiotics when they were uncertain whether a bacterial infection was causing an illness.

Researchers Comment on Findings:

Study author Ari Robicsek of NorthShore said the finding that physicians prescribed fewer antibiotics during flu pandemics shows that hospitals could do more to inform physicians about illnesses in the community.

Robicsek said that NorthShore is working to develop a tool that would help hospitals use EHR data to alert physicians about illnesses in their area (Pittman, *Reuters*, 8/6).

Read more: <http://www.californiahealthline.org/articles/2012/8/8/study-ehrs-could-help-physicians-decide-when-to-prescribe-antibiotics.aspx?p=1#ixzz22ytMgqPL>