

Electronic Health Records in Chinese Medicine and Integrative Medicine:

Experience in China, Hong Kong, United States of America, Canada, Australia

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Healthcare informatics such as clinical management system has long been developed for health-related purposes in Western medicine. A clinical management is a computer program that assists healthcare providers in performing clinical tasks. An important feature of a clinical management system is the ability to store patient information as electronic health records (EHRs). An EHR contains patient demographic and medical information that is managed and transferred electronically. Clinical Management System that are designed and developed for Chinese Medicine are now available for clinical use. Traditional Chinese Medicine Advisor (TCMA) is a clinical management system developed by HerbMiners Informatics Limited, PuraPharm and Nong's. It is currently deployed over 500 clinics in Hong Kong and over 300 hospitals in China. The mobile clinic are deployed in many NGOs (such as Yan Oi Tong). It is technically possible to integrate clinical data with patient records from Chinese Medicine clinics using Chinese Medicine Systems and to conduct Chinese Medicine and Integrative Medicine research. To evaluate the feasibility of adopting a centralized Chinese Medicine database, two factors need to be studied: (1) The barriers to and facilitators for uptake of the Chinese Medicine database; (2) The feasibility of conducting epidemiological analyses using data from the Chinese Medicine database. A survey study was conducted to investigate Factor 1 and a descriptive pilot study to investigate Factor 2. PuraPharm international integrative (Chinese-Western) Medicine research collaboration with University of Toronto, King's College London, University of Sydney, University of Hong Kong. Increasingly western allopathic medical practitioners are utilizing TCM Herbs or techniques in conjunction with the allopathic drugs. While this is a welcome development, it requires careful elaboration in its use. It is known that if more than one allopathic drug is used, drug interactions can produce one of the following situations: (i) The drugs have a positive and complementary effect on each other increasing their therapeutic capability; (ii) They have a negative effect which reduces the potential effect of one or more of the drugs; (iii) They can have an adverse reaction introducing further undesirable side effects; and (iv) They can have no effect on each other. When using Herbs with Orthodox allopathic drugs, one has to be aware that the above four interactions can also take place. When we introduce the use of Herbs with the orthodox allopathic, the situation can become more complex.