Diversity in strategies for obtaining standardised clinical documentation

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During the last decade all Danish Regions have experienced some unfruitful Electronic Medical Record (EMR) projects. Many of the projects have had severe problems, when it came to diffusion of systems that supports clinical work. It was realised that one of the big challenges is the need for a standardised and structured clinical documentation. Thus projects developing support for standardised documentation were established in all of the 5 Danish regions. The projects referred to as Clinical Content (Sundhedfagligt Indhold – SFI) has been endemic in Denmark. This paper describes a preliminary survey to examine the visions and the organisational anchoring of these projects.

Semi structured interviews were made with SFI project managers in all 5 Danish regions. The interviews were analysed in three focus areas: the projects subject matter, the strategic visions and how the projects were organised. Further the MUST method was used for a coding process inspired by grounded theory.

The Regions are in different stages of developing/implementing EMR’s. All regions had elements of EMR systems running in some or all hospitals in the region. All the project managers consider close - but different - relations between SFI and EMR. The strategic visions as well as the vision for change are not clearly verbalised in any of the projects. In some of the projects focus was on defining a genuine model for clinical documentation, in others the focus was on making specific documentation templates for a large number of diseases/ conditions and activities, including pre-defined range for results.

The SFI projects were generally regarded as a precondition to secure the success of the EMR projects, although it was a general belief among the project managers that clinical documentation templates can be made independently of EMR systems. In all the projects quality improvement of the clinical documentation are in focus and this will require new documentation models or templates but also a major educational effort as well as new work processes. There have been made attempts on defining detailed documentation templates before, but none in a scale like the Danish SFI projects. It is a huge task to establish such templates covering the major part of all clinical documentation. Although there is focus on cooperation in all the regional projects it is surprising that coordination has not yet been established among the projects on establishment of templates for clinical documentation.

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