

How DataSUS' Master Person Index Can Transform the Health Care System in Brazil

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Around the world, the use of Information Technology in the healthcare sector has grown in the past two decades, both in the private and public sectors. Today, electronic information systems are used not only for the management of healthcare units — such as hospitals and clinics, and public health resources — but also in applications that support quality and safe healthcare delivery. The use of software to record procedures performed by healthcare professionals, together with modern communications technologies, the Internet and portable device resources, including computers with high level data processing and storage capacity, enable healthcare professionals to have access, at any place or time, to a vast array of information regarding patients through their health records, as well as the best clinical practices information.

DataSUS is the Information Technology department of the Brazilian Ministry of Health. The national record system of the Single Payer System (SUS) handles 245 million records in the database. One of the targets DataSUS has is to transform this huge database into a reliable data source, allowing SUS systems to access users' identification information through their National Health Cards (CNS), and avoiding redundancy and false identification of patients. In order to face the challenge of qualifying the entries in the SUS user registry, ensuring the reliable identification of each user, DataSUS acquired the Oracle Healthcare Master Person Index – OHMPI – to deduplicate the database, allowing DataSUS to finally design a user record with reliable information. It is important to highlight that the allocation of more than one CNS number to the same user does not represent a problem if all numbers are linked to each other and to a master number (which means they have been deduplicated, and all identify the same person, with the same information under this master number).

With reliable identification of users and integration of SUS systems, it becomes possible to design an Electronic Health Record (EHR) for every citizen, a repository of individual records of services carried out and clinical records, and other important information to better care for citizens' health and their well-being, monitoring records throughout their lives from the moment of birth. Thus, designing a user record with reliable information is a basic condition to organize eHealth in the country. The use of OHMPI as the tool to deduplicate the database and keep it up-to-date with new records is key to allow the design of a national registry that has a subgroup of EMR information that are important (immunization, allergies, etc.) or significant for future treatments or even to the continuity of a treatment in different places. This way, the national database would have only a summary of information that effectively provided better care for citizens throughout their lives, regardless of place. The challenges of designing an electronic health record are major and require interoperability of many systems, setting health information standards and a specific legal framework, besides addressing principles of professional ethics and robust governance of information, ensuring privacy, confidentiality, security, quality and data integrity.

Another great challenge lies in mutual agreements for interstate governance that supports an electronic health record system for all, with updated information, for effective use across the country, regardless of place of residence or treatment. However, despite these challenges, we expect great benefits for patients, professionals, and managers in health care. In particular, it is a tool that enables patients to have a more active role in their own health care.

For more info: http://export.gov/brazil/industryhighlights/healthit/eg_br_084597.asp