Reviewer's report

Title: A systematic review of patient access to medical records in the acute setting: practicalities, perspectives and ethical consequences

Version: 0 Date: 09 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Monique Jonas

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper, which addresses an important, evolving area of clinical practice that raises both practical and ethical concerns. This review is of value in supplying an overview of a growing body of evidence and scholarly thought about patient access to records. In general it is well and clearly written with only a few minor edits required (I have signaled these in my attached comments). The methods were appropriate and generally clearly described, although it would be useful to include a little more detail about how the ethics literature, which encompassed a wider range of settings than the empirical literature, was integrated into the results. How did the authors apply the ethical concerns or considerations derived, for instance, from reviews of access to general practice records or patient portals, to the adult acute admissions hospital setting? It would also be useful to expand upon the way that patient, doctor and other health professional contributions were sorted and synthesised. The method is described as critical- how was a critical lens applied to these results? The discussion seems to be largely descriptive.

With respect to the results, the themes would be more meaningful if more detail about the studies included was provided. For instance, it was unclear:

1. Whether the studies included data concerning projected/theoretical patient access in hospital settings or only data concerning access that was taking place. It is hard to know whether the concerns expressed were hypothetical or based upon experiences.

2. How thoughts expressed based on hypothetical possibilities were (or should be) weighed against evidence from or views based on practical experience.

3. How 'patient access to clinical records' was understood or enacted across the studies. What did 'real time access' amount to?

I appreciate that it is difficult to get into detail in a paper of this length. Overall the themes extracted are plausible and relevant to understanding the ethical issues to which patient access to records gives rise. However there are some crucial points at which more nuance would add meaning. For instance, it is reported that access to notes can enhance trust: this is a very general point, but also a disputable one. I would have thought that some of the clinical concern about patients accessing notes might relate to concerns about trust- about comments being misconstrued, or about a need to change entrenched but also potentially offensive forms of shorthand in order not to compromise patient trust. A little theorising of trust and what promotes it would enable the authors to derive more meaning from the studies.

The relevance of this review to practical settings would be increased by accounting for the implications of multidisciplinary participation in hospital-based patient care. It is implicit in this paper that providing care in hospitals is a two-party affair: doctors and patients. I recognise that the focus is on doctors, but
understanding the ethical and practical implications of patient access to records requires some note to be taken of the other players. In particular, nurses may well be asked to interpret results or notations by patients (which may problematise or change clinical role parameters). The role that the clinical record plays in informing other practitioners and coordinating care across professions and services should be noted- although I accept that it cannot be resolved in a paper of this length.

Finally, the critical promise of the paper is not quite delivered- the discussion and conclusions are descriptive rather than critical. Some re-assessment of the paper's aims is called for: is it to summarise or to critically the current state of play?

I hope that these comments are useful as you review this paper. I have also provided an annotated copy of the manuscript which includes some specific suggestions and questions.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published
Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal