

Chapter II

Applied Ethics and ICT-Systems in Healthcare*

Göran Collste, Linköping University, Sweden

Abstract

What are the ethical implications of information and communication technology in healthcare and how can new ICT-systems fit in an ethically based healthcare system? In this chapter, new ICT-applications in healthcare are assessed from an ethical perspective. The first application assessed is a system making patient information accessible for all healthcare units at a district, county or even national level. The second application, the so-called patient portal, is a system for patient Internet access to his or her medical record. The third application is the use of the Internet as a source of medical information, a means for medical consultation and for marketing of drugs. The systems are primarily assessed by the following ethical principles; the principle of doctor-patient relationship, the principle of responsibility and the principle of autonomy.

Introduction

Healthcare is going through a transformation caused by the use of ICT. While healthcare basically is a moral enterprise, aiming at the health and well-being of patients, the transformation should be assessed in regard to how the new organisation and the new technology affect the possibilities to realise the values of healthcare. In this chapter, I will ethically assess three different kinds of ICT applications in healthcare: a system for patient information, a system for patient access to his or her medical record, and e-medicine.

What does it mean to make an ethical assessment of technology? This is a kind of technology assessment (TA) using ethical criteria. It is also the kind of activity that one finds in applied ethics.

What should I do? What is right? These questions are the point of departure for ethics. In ethics, the moral content of our actions is analysed. How should we act in order to achieve human well-being and avoid harm, respect human dignity, human rights, and privacy? Human beings are social animals and, hence, we act in different spheres of society—as individuals, as professionals, and as citizens. In applied ethics, the questions of what we should do and what is right are related to social action. Applied ethics is an expanding field. One reason is the increasing complexity of human action. With the help of new technology we can do more complex things, but we also face new and difficult moral problems. This is not least true in medicine.

Much of the discussion in medical ethics concerns new medical possibilities provided through new scientific discoveries and new technological inventions. Ethical problems related to pre-natal genetic diagnosis and embryonic stem cells research are just two examples of current hot topics for discussions in medical ethics. However, it seems as medical ethicists generally have overlooked the thoroughly technical transformation of healthcare the last decade or so caused by the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) in healthcare.

All kinds of actions in healthcare (i.e., patient registration, medical consultations, medical diagnosis, therapy, drug prescriptions, etc.) are nowadays supported by ICT. While, as medical philosophers Pellegrino and Thomasma state, “Medicine is at all levels a moral enterprise where ‘moral enterprise’ means action involving values” (Pellegrino & Thomasma, 1981, p. 112), the changes of medicine due to the application of new ICT have implications for the “moral enterprise” of medicine and should be assessed from an ethical point of view.

In this chapter, I will discuss some different ICT applications in healthcare. The first application is a system making patient information accessible for all healthcare units at a district, county, or even national level. The second application, the so-called patient portal, is a system for patient Internet access to his or her medical record. The third application is the use of Internet as a source of medical information, a means for medical consultation and for marketing of drugs. The three cases are

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/applied-ethics-ict-systems-healthcare/18609

Related Content

Innovative Hospital Management: Tracking of Radiological Protection Equipment

Holger Fritzsche, Elmer Jeto Gomes Ataide, Afshan Bi, Rohit Kalva, Sandeep Tripathi, Axel Boese, Michael Friebeand Tim Gonschorek (2020). *International Journal of Biomedical and Clinical Engineering* (pp. 33-47).

www.irma-international.org/article/innovative-hospital-management/240745

Effect of Wavelet Packet Log Energy Entropy on Electroencephalogram (EEG) Signals

S. Raghu, N. Sriraamand G. Pradeep Kumar (2015). *International Journal of Biomedical and Clinical Engineering* (pp. 32-43).

www.irma-international.org/article/effect-of-wavelet-packet-log-energy-entropy-on-electroencephalogram-eeg-signals/136234

Using Eye Tracking to Explore Visual Attention in Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Anne M. P. Michalek, Jonna Bobzien, Victor A. Lugo, Chung Hao Chen, Ann Bruhn, Michail Giannakosand Anne Michalek (2021). *International Journal of Biomedical and Clinical Engineering* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/article/using-eye-tracking-to-explore-visual-attention-in-adolescents-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/272059

Envisioning a National e-Medicine Network Architecture in a Developing Country: A Case Study

Fikreyohannes Lemma, Mieso K. Denko, Joseph K. Tanand Samuel Kinde Kassegne (2009). *Medical Informatics: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1322-1341).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/envisioning-national-medicine-network-architecture/26299

The Clinical Analysis of Combined Effects of Huperzine A and Memantine for Alzheimer's Disease

Shouzi Zhang, Qinyun Liand Maolong Gao (2011). *Early Detection and Rehabilitation Technologies for Dementia: Neuroscience and Biomedical Applications* (pp. 112-116).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/clinical-analysis-combined-effects-huperzine/53428