

Chapter IV

Values of an Electronic Social Record

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Abstract

This chapter analyses the effects of introducing ICT as a support for the social record in elderly care. The effects of the electronic social record are assessed by analysing the different values the electronic social record supports. These values are discussed in terms of “value areas” (values related to administration, integration, professional, and care), which is a categorization of anticipated and experienced effects of using ICT in elderly care. This is a case study where the analysis is a comparison of the social record before and after the introduction of ICT as a support for using the social record. Furthermore, the study also assesses how valuable it is to use “value areas” as an analytical tool when evaluating the effects of ICT.

Introduction

Development of ICT (information and communication technology) systems is a process of making social and technological design choices, with the purpose of serving human interest (Hedström, 2007). This means that development of ICT systems naturally involves moral value judgments (Klein & Hirschheim, 1996, 2001), and neither technology such as ICT systems nor the development process can be seen as value neutral (Klein & Hirschheim, 2001; Mumford, 1981; Winner, 1999). It is therefore important to be aware of the socio-political implications, as well as content, of ICT systems. One example of an ICT system, which in a high degree influences the social, is the electronic record. An electronic record is a medical or social record delivered and used through an ICT-system. ICT systems, such as the electronic record, can be more or less intentionally introduced as a way to change a work practice (see also discussion in Iacono & Kling, 1996). Design and use of records influences how the care is carried out. Introducing new technology, such as ICT systems changes work—and communication routines. These changes may be expected, but often are the effects of ICT difficult to anticipate, with sometimes positive and sometimes negative effects as a consequence.

This chapter analyses the use of a new electronic social record used by nursing assistants and section managers in elderly care, by comparing the use of the social record before and after the introduction of an ICT-supported social record. This article analyses, and discusses, the values of a new electronic social record introduced within elderly care. The social record analysed in this study is one module within a larger application, named SAVA, used for information sharing within elderly care (described in more detail below). The purpose of the social record is to provide documentation of elderly care. Another objective of this chapter is to test the concept of “value areas” (Hedström, 2007) as analytical framework for evaluating the electronic social record. The value of ICT in elderly care can be illustrated by different “value areas,” which demonstrates the values that have guided the development process as well as users’ experiences of utilizing the ICT system. A value area is classified from the organizational actors’ anticipated and experienced effects of introducing and using ICT. These value areas are common values related to the introduction and use of ICT within elderly care (Hedström, 2007) (more discussion on the choice and use of the analytical tool can be found in the section below), such as administration values, integration values, care values, and professional values.

The chapter is organized as follows: section two examines the nature of care work, and section three considers the values of ICT in elderly care. The fourth section describes the case study, followed by the research method in section five. The following and sixth section compares the use of the social record before and after the introduction of SAVA, and section seven analyzes the value of using the electronic social record. The last section in the chapter gives a short conclusion and summarizes the results.

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