

Advancing oral medicine through informatics and information technology: A proposed framework and strategy

Article type: Article

Abstract:

The implementation of information technology in healthcare is a significant focus for many nations around the world. However, information technology support for clinical care, research and education in oral medicine is currently poorly developed. This situation hampers our ability to transform oral medicine into a 'learning healthcare discipline' in which the divide between clinical practice and research is diminished and, ultimately, eliminated. This paper reviews the needs of and requirements for information technology support of oral medicine and proposes an agenda designed to meet those needs. For oral medicine, this agenda includes analyzing and reviewing current clinical and documentation practices, working toward progressively standardizing clinical data, and helping define requirements for oral medicine systems. IT professionals can contribute by conducting baseline studies about the use of electronic systems, helping develop controlled vocabularies and ontologies, and designing, implementing, and evaluating novel systems centered on the needs of clinicians, researchers and educators. Successfully advancing IT support for oral medicine will require close coordination and collaboration among oral medicine professionals, information technology professionals, system vendors, and funding agencies. If current barriers and obstacles are overcome, practice and research in oral medicine stand ready to derive significant benefits from the application of information technology.

Author	Schleyer, T. ; Mattsson, U. ; Ní Ríordáin, R. ; Brailo, V. ; Glick, M. Zain, R. ; Jontell, M
Source	Oral Diseases
ISSN	1354-523X
DOI	10.1111/j.1601-0825.2011.01794.x
Volume	17
Page	85-94
Year	2011

Keyword:

electronic health records; patient records; care; systems; management; physicians; education; future; work; key

Please Cite As:

SCHLEYER, T., MATTSSON, U., RIORDAIN, R. N., BRAILO, V., GLICK, M., ZAIN, R. B. & JONTELL, M. 2011. **Advancing oral medicine through informatics and information technology: a proposed framework and strategy.** *Oral Diseases*, 17, 85-94.

URL:

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