Innovation

EMERGING IDEAS FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE
Much of the medical and health systems research of the future will be carried out in real time as clinicians work – using electronic systems that constantly learn.

**Medical and health systems research of the future**

Vast electronic data banks are already transforming research in all fields. In health care, data banks offer an unprecedented opportunity to optimise care and planning. Clinicians will work with ‘bedside’ electronic support systems that enable them to instantly match a patient’s personalised data to the latest evidence-based guidelines for care. At the same time, such support systems will double as invaluable research tools. As new patient data is added while clinicians work the knowledge base will be continuously updated. This will enable accurate analyses, feed improvements for treatment and care back into the system and identify trends as they emerge. Such new approaches will transform traditional research models, bridging the gap between clinicians and academics.
One such innovation now in development is the so-called ‘green button’ that promises to revolutionise care at the clinical coalface. When a patient arrives at a clinic, doctors will be able to search stored patient records for similar combinations of symptoms and indicators, and, if appropriate, seek guidance based on the trajectories and outcomes of similar patients. As data banks grow – and as more information is shared across health systems – information about even rare conditions and complex combinations of symptoms and conditions will be instantly accessible to clinicians as they work. ‘The green button would be built into the healthcare system – it is the interface between clinical care and the evidence,’ says AIHI’s data analysis and modelling expert, Dr Blanca Gallego-Luxan. Advances in text processing will eventually allow for automated queries and the easy retrieval of meaningful visualisations of related evidence from published clinical trials. ‘If these capabilities are combined, both clinicians and patients will be able to visualise the effects of selected treatments on similar patients at the press of a button,’ according to Dr Gallego-Luxan.

Such frontline real-time data mining and analysis tools will not only support treatment decisions but assist the management of healthcare systems. Predictions will, for example, indicate when a hospitalised patient can expect to be discharged and what care they will need over various time frames. ‘This will help clinicians with important discharge planning strategies for their patients, which are likely to improve continuity of care, preventing readmissions and post-discharge adverse events.’ Dr Gallego-Luxan says the tools will also help ‘in initiating important discussions on end-of-life care.’
Tackling missed test results

The AIHI is also designing and testing electronic acknowledgement systems to help overcome the potential for harm caused by missed test results. An AIHI systematic review of the best evidence available internationally, led by Associate Professor Joanne Callen, found up to 62 per cent of laboratory tests and up to 36 per cent of radiology tests for patients attending GPs, clinics or hospital outpatient departments are never reviewed by doctors. Unread reports included tests which had returned positive findings for cancer. In Australia alone about one billion dollars a year is spent on medical tests and for every hospital admission in Australia over 100 tests are ordered. One key question is how technology can help alert clinicians to test results to prevent them being overlooked. Another emerging option is to provide test results directly to patients – a solution being investigated by AIHI.

DATA MINING TO PERSONALISE AND IMPROVE HEALTHCARE

The increasing demand for personalised care plus the growing availability of large electronic biomedical patient datasets is revolutionising the role that data can play in healthcare delivery. AIHI’s work pushes the boundaries of e-health research by combining advanced, innovative methods in epidemiology and machine learning to answer specific questions for specific patients in real time. Our work will extend the power of health analytics beyond the research lab into clinical practice.
Innovation – emerging ideas for better healthcare
Who are we?

**DR BLANCA GALLEGO LUXAN**

Is a Senior Research Fellow at AIHI where she leads the Health Analytics Lab. Trained as a physicist, she has extensive international research experience in data analysis and computational modelling and has made significant and innovative contributions to the design, analysis and development of models derived from complex empirical data for a wide range of applications such as patient safety, bio-surveillance, corporate sustainability reporting, ecological footprint analysis and climate variability.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JOANNE CALLEN**

Is a Senior Research Fellow at AIHI in the Centre for Health Systems and Safety Research. Her research centres on exploring how information and communication technologies can improve health outcomes for patients and support health professionals in the delivery of high quality, safe, and efficient patient care.
EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE’VE PUBLISHED


Who should you contact?

Dr Blanca Gallego Luxan
Centre for Health Informatics
AIHI, Macquarie University, Australia
NSW 2109 Australia
E: blanca.gallegoluxan@mq.edu.au
T: +61 2 9850 2400

Associate Professor Joanne Callen
Centre for Health Systems and Safety Research,
AIHI, Macquarie University, Australia
NSW 2109 Australia
E: Joanne.callen@mq.edu.au
T: +61 2 9850 2425

Macquarie University
North Ryde, New South Wales 2109
T: (02) 9850 2400
mq.edu.au