

Abstract

Towards an Access Control and Consent Strategy for an Electronic Healthcare Record (EHR) in Ireland: What can we learn from the experience of other nations?

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Privacy is a fundamental right, and despite living in a world where that privacy is increasingly difficult to maintain, some aspects of our lives should necessarily remain private; this includes our personal healthcare information.

As this health information is now becoming increasingly available through integrated health information systems, and in particular the emergence of national Electronic Healthcare Records (EHRs), this has presented new challenges concerning the protection of the privacy and confidentiality of that data.

As a result, national interoperability programmes must strategically address these issues, including an approach to topics such as EHR identities, access control and consent management.

This research seeks to inform Ireland's National EHR programme on these specific areas, and this is achieved through an exploration of the experiences of, and lessons learned in three countries: England, the Netherlands and Canada.

The research methodology is qualitative in nature, and based on the multi-case case study approach. Evidence was collated from interviews with senior employees, in positions of responsibility central to the main research themes, and also from the available documentation in the literature and from national artefacts.

Analysis was conducted iteratively through cross-case comparison based on the theory building paradigm. A number of central themes emerged relating to:

- role engineering processes,
- finding a socio-technical balance to the access control strategy, and
- establishing a clear national position on consent management issues at the outset.

These themes are reflected in a series of twelve recommendations to the National Integrated Services Framework (NISF), Ireland's EHR interoperability programme.