

**Abstract of parallel session: S 16**

Title: Bridging the gap between health care research & policy  
Patient-sharing networks – a new concept to link research and health policy

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Abstract no: 73

Presentation language: English

Abstract

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The aim of the session is to introduce the various concepts of patient-sharing networks for research and as a platform for intervention to a wider audience.

Most patients with a serious acute or at least one chronic condition today will be treated by more than one physician. This holds true for care provided by larger institutions (e.g. individual hospitals) as it does for a larger perspective across various institutions (e.g. all physician offices / hospitals in a given region). Patient-sharing networks refer to virtual or intended cooperation between providers who have been treating the same patients over a period of time. Patient-sharing may improve or reduce quality of care depending on the degree of cooperation between the providers.

A new line of research looks at patient-sharing as a key to quality of care. Aims and methods still vary widely indicating that this appears to become a very dynamic field. [1] New methods to identify patient-sharing networks borrow from social network analysis which takes recourse to completely different statistical methods than usually applied in epidemiology. Whichever method applied patient-sharing networks allow to reassess causes and relevance of variation in health care; a degree of personalized accountability for observed variation can be established which offers to explore potential remedies to reduce unwarranted variation. In some countries the analysis of patient-sharing networks has given rise to interventions designed to improve cooperation and health care outcomes.

Attendees of the session will meet representatives of present research done at Dartmouth and Harvard, in Canada, in Italy and in Germany. Intervention projects from the US, Canada and Germany will be presented.

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