

The impacts of poor data quality

Rise in C.difficile cases undetected

At Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, data on Clostridium difficile infections were found to be incomplete during the investigation into outbreaks of the infection between April 2004 and September 2006 (report published in 2007). The lack of timely and effective monitoring using complete data was one factor in delays in identifying the seriousness of C. difficile infection in the trust and responding to the situation. The report notes that "the significant outbreak in the autumn of 2005 was missed and the trust has acknowledged that it should have detected the rise in cases at that time".

[http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/db/documents/Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells investigation report Oct 2007.pdf](http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/db/documents/Maidstone_and_Tunbridge_Wells_investigation_report_Oct_2007.pdf)

Poor demographics data could lead to cancelled operations

The PDS National Back office reports that poor data quality in demographics results in duplicate and confused patient entries on NHS systems. In other words, one patient with more than one NHS number, or the same NHS number assigned to more than one patient. The consequences can result in incorrect and mixed medical records, missed screening requests and even cancelled operations.

<http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/demographics/backoffice>

NPSA receive over 1,300 reports of incidents involving data quality

The National Patient Safety Agency reports that 'Between June 2006 and August 2008 [they] received reports of over 1,300 incidents resulting from confusion and errors about patients' identifying numbers. Many of these involved local numbering systems. While no deaths or cases of serious harm to patients have been reported so far, healthcare staff have commented that this is causing significant risk to patient safety.'

<http://www.npsa.nhs.uk/corporate/news/nhsnumber/>

Poor record keeping impacts the quality of care

The joint investigation by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Healthcare Commission into the provision of services to people with learning disabilities at Cornwall Partnership NHS Trust (Healthcare Commission, 2006) found that poor record keeping was one factor in the poor quality of care provided to some people.

http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/db/documents/cornwall_investigation_report.pdf

Poor data inhibits commissioning

The review of maternity services provided by NW London Hospitals, July 2005, found generally poor data quality in maternity services (p29) and weaknesses in clinical records (p46). p25 and 26 of the report comment on the poor data provided by the trust to its commissioning PCTs that probably inhibited monitoring and planning. No clear link with the quality of care but concerns expressed about incomplete clinical information.

<http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/db/documents/04018499.pdf>