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American Journal of Emergency Medicine

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ajemThe
American Journal of
Emergency Medicine

Original Contribution

Motivations and barriers to implementing electronic health records and ED information systems in Japan

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article info

Article history:

Received 4 February 2014

Received in revised form 20 March 2014

Accepted 20 March 2014

Available online xxxx

abstract

Background: Although electronic health record systems (EHRs) and emergency department information systems (EDISs) enable safe, efficient, and high-quality care, these systems have not yet been studied well. Here, we assessed (1) the prevalence of EHRs and EDISs, (2) changes in efficiency in emergency medical practices after introducing EHR and EDIS, and (3) barriers to and expectations from the EHR-EDIS transition in EDs of medical facilities with EHRs in Japan.

Materials and methods: A survey regarding EHR (basic or comprehensive) and EDIS implementation was mailed to 466 hospitals. We examined the efficiency after EHR implementation and observed barriers and expectations regarding the use of EDIS with existing EHRs. The **Original text:**

Results: Totally, 215 hospitals completed the survey (response rate 46%). 4.2% had comprehensive EHRs, and 1.9% had EDISs. After introduction of EHRs, the time required to access previous patient information and share patient information was reduced. In hospitals with EHRs, the most commonly cited barriers to EDIS adoption and maintenance and potential adverse effects on workflow were the lack of staff and the need for additional staff. EDIS transition was establishing appropriate clinical guidelines.

Conclusion: To attract EDs to EDIS from EHR, systems focusing on the integration of EHR and EDIS, the improvement of medical records and establishing appropriate clinical guidelines

1. Introduction

Developed primarily for use in general inpatient and outpatient care, electronic health record systems (EHRs) have improved patient care worldwide [1-3]. However, extending EHRs to the emergency

department (ED) setting has been a challenge due to differences between the requirements of general medical practice and those of an ED. Specifically, EDs must routinely treat several patients simultaneously, and many patients do not schedule their visits [4-6]. Therefore, EDs require customized emergency department information systems (EDISs) that reflect the unique procedures and treatments performed in emergency care settings [4,7].

First proposed in 1975 [8], EDISs are now defined broadly as "EHRs designed specifically to manage data and workflow in support of ED patient care and operations [9]." Cumulative evidence indicates that EDISs have improved workflow and patient care in the ED [10]. However, to the best of our knowledge, although there has been only one report on the prevalence of EDIS from the United States [11], the prevalence of EDISs in Japan is not known.

In Japan, EHR adoption assumed that the prevalence of EHRs was high. However, the shortage of medical staff and the need for additional staff to care for patients visiting EDs, widely recognized as a problem that urgently needed to improve

☆ Grant: This work was funded by a grant-in-aid for Young Scientists (C) (12710000424) to IIS, MG, NY, and SN and a Health Labour Sciences Research Grant to HS, NY, and SN.

☆☆ Author contribution: RI conceived the study. RI, HS, YK, and SN designed the analysis plan. RI and HS performed the statistical analyses. RI wrote the first draft of the study. KN and YA contributed to draft of the study. RI, KN, MG, TM, YK, NY, and SN obtained the data. YA, KS, and NY critically reviewed the manuscript. All authors contributed to the design, interpretation of results, and critical revision of the article for intellectually important content.

★ Conflicts of interest statement: The authors declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest.

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[13]. To facilitate hospitals' adoption of such systems (thereby supporting prompt, safe medical treatment in the ED), it is particularly important to determine why hospitals with EHRs hesitate to introduce EDISs. The aim of this multicenter survey was to identify current problems with EHR and the barriers to EDIS adoption in Japan. To this end, we conducted a questionnaire survey on (1) the prevalence of EHR and EDIS adoption, (2) the changes made after EHR introduction, and (3) the barriers to and expectations for EHR-EDIS transitions in Japanese emergency medical facilities with existing EHRs.

2. Method

2.1. Setting: emergency medical facilities in Japan

In Japan, emergency medical facilities are designated as primary, secondary, or tertiary care facilities [16], and paramedics choose the appropriate health care facilities depending on the patient's condition. Primary care facilities do not have beds, as they are designed for walk-in patients who do not require in-hospital care. Secondary care facilities provide inpatient care to both walk-in patients and those transported by ambulance; these facilities are used to examine and treat patients with moderately severe conditions. Tertiary care facilities offer intensive treatment to critically ill or injured patients in all medical specialties [17].

2.2. Sample

The questionnaire was sent to the ED directors of 466 hospitals listed as accredited training institutions by the Japanese Association for Acute Medicine in 2012 [18]. The survey was initially mailed in February 2013; all hospitals received reminder letters, and responses were accepted until the end of April 2013. The survey was completed anonymously.

2.3. Survey content

Electronic health record systems interact with clinical documentation, computerized provider-order entry (CPOE) [19], and clinical decision-support system (CDSS) [20]. The CPOE is communicated over a computer network to the medical staff or to the departments (eg, prescription, laboratory, or radiology) responsible for fulfilling the order. A CDSS is an interactive decision-support system designed to assist physicians with decisions such as patient diagnosis. Thus, we divided EHR functions into 4 categories: "clinical documentation," "test and imaging results," "CPOE," and "CDSS."

Respondents were first asked whether their hospital (1) had EHR for all departments, (2) had an EHR only for general inpatient and outpatient use but not in the ED, or (3) had no EHR for any hospital department. If they reported having an EHR in place for the ED, they were asked to specify the type of EHR according to the classification system of Jha et al [21]: "basic EHR" (demographic information, CPOE, and laboratory and imaging results) or "comprehensive EHR" (the functions listed for the basic system as well as electronic prescribing, radiographic image display, and CDSS). Detailed information regarding the classifications is presented in Table 1. Accordingly, we divided the hospitals into 4 categories: hospitals with comprehensive EHR, those with basic EHR, those with EHR for inpatient or outpatient departments but not for the ED, and those with no EHR in the hospital. Respondents with EHR were further asked to specify whether (1) their EHR had been developed exclusively for use in an ED or (2) their

EHR was designed for general inpatient and outpatient care and was partially customized for use in an ED. We defined the former as EDIS because there are no standardized definitions or required functions in EDIS [22].

Second, respondents with EHR and EDIS were asked whether they thought that introducing the EHR had improved the efficiency of their

Table 1 Requirements for the 2 types of EHR systems

Requirements	Comprehensive EHR	Basic EHR	
Clinical documentation			t1:4
Demographic characteristics of patients	✓	✓	t1:5
Physician notes	✓	✓	t1:6
Nursing assessments	✓	✓	t1:7
Problem lists	✓	✓	t1:8
Medication lists	✓	✓	t1:9
Discharge summaries	✓	✓	t1:10
Advance directives ^a	✓		t1:11
CPOE			t1:12
Laboratory tests	✓		t1:13
Radiology tests	✓		t1:14
Medications	✓	✓	t1:15
Consultation requests	✓		t1:16
Nursing orders	✓		t1:17
Test and imaging results			t1:18
Laboratory reports	✓	✓	t1:19
Radiology reports	✓	✓	t1:20
Radiology images	✓		t1:21
Diagnostic test results	✓	✓	t1:22
Diagnostic test images	✓		t1:23
Consultant reports	✓		t1:24
CDSS			t1:25
Clinical guidelines	✓		t1:26
Clinical reminders	✓		t1:27
Drug allergy alerts	✓		t1:28
Drug-drug interaction alerts	✓		t1:29
Drug-laboratory interaction alerts ^b	✓		t1:30
Drug-dose support ^c	✓		t1:31

^a That is, do not resuscitate. t1:32
^b For example, digoxin and low level of serum potassium. t1:33
^c For example, renal dose guidelines. t1:34

emergency practices. Items in this section were rated as "improved," "no change," or "worsened." 125-126

Third, respondents with EHR were asked to identify factors that they considered to be (1) major barriers, (2) minor barriers, or (3) no barriers regarding "cost," "ED practice," "introducing an EDIS," and "data privacy." Items in this section were rated as "major barrier," "minor barrier," and "not a barrier." 127-131

Finally, respondents with and without EHR were asked to rate their expectations for EDIS as "essential," "very desirable," "desirable," or "no need." The questions and response categories used are listed in the Supplementary file A and B. 132-135

2.4. Statistical analysis 136

2.4.1. Difference in hospital size between respondent and nonrespondent hospitals 137-138

First, we conducted Pearson χ^2 test to investigate differences between respondent and nonrespondent hospitals in terms of hospital size. 139-141

2.4.2. Adoption of EHRs and EDISs 142

We then calculated the percentage of respondent hospitals with and without EHRs. The former was further divided into the 2 types of EHRs (basic or comprehensive EHR), and the latter was divided into 2 types (EHR in the inpatient or outpatient departments but not in the ED and no EHR in the hospital). Next, we explored bivariate relationships among key hospital characteristics (hospital size, ownership, teaching status, and medical facility classification) and adoption of basic or comprehensive EHR using Pearson χ^2 or Fisher exact tests, as appropriate. 143-151

2.4.3. Impact of introduction of EHRs and EDISs 152

Second, we carried out Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare the effects of introducing EHR on the respondent hospital emergency practices, as measured by 7 questions. 153-155

Table 2
Characteristics of survey respondents and all survey hospitals

	Respondents, n = 215 (%)
Size	
Small (<100 beds)	5 (2.3)
Medium (100-399 beds)	48 (22.3)
Large (\geq 400 beds)	149 (69.3)
Unknown/no response	13 (6.0)
Ownership	
National	38 (17.7)
Municipal	49 (22.8)
Public	47 (21.9)
Private	72 (33.5)
Unknown/no response	9 (4.2)
Teaching status	
Teaching	185 (86.0)
Nonteaching	10 (4.7)
Unknown/no response	15 (7.0)
Total hospital beds (mean \pm SD)	551 \pm 248
Total observation beds (mean \pm SD)	5.4 \pm 3.1
Total ambulance admissions per year (mean \pm SD)	4007 \pm 2074
Medical facility classification	
Tertiary care	117 (54.4)
Secondary care	94 (43.7)
Primary care	0 (0)
Unknown/no response	4 (1.9)

2.4.4. Barriers to EHR-EDIS transition

Third, we analyzed the scores of 11 questions regarding barriers, rated as 2 ("major barrier"), 1 ("minor barrier"), or 0 ("no barrier"). We divided these questions into 4 categories and compared the difference in categories by using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

2.4.5. Expectations regarding the functionality of EDISs

Finally, we compared the characteristics of hospitals with and without EHR by using univariate comparisons of reported expectation scores, with either Student *t* test or the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney *U* test, as appropriate.

We compared the characteristics of respondents with all survey hospitals using STATA software, version 13 (Stata Corp, College Station, TX). For all analyses, statistical significance was set as 2-tailed *P* < .05.

3. Results

Among the 466 hospitals contacted, 215 completed the survey (46.1% response rate) (Table 2). There were no significant differences in hospital size between respondent and nonrespondent hospitals.

3.1. Adoption of EHRs and EDISs

Among the 215 respondents, only 9 hospitals (4.2%) had basic EHRs in their EDs. Only 9 hospitals (4.2%) had basic EHRs in their EDs. We found that hospitals were more likely to use EHRs. We found that hospitals were more likely to use EHRs. We found that hospitals were more likely to use EHRs. We found that hospitals were more likely to use EHRs.

3.2. Adoption of CPOE and CDSS

As shown in Table 4, all hospitals had adopted CPOE for "test and imaging results;" 82% (177/215) that they already had "advanced directives" (73%) and "nursing orders" (88%) functions. The lowest scores belonged to the CDSS category. Most hospitals had alerts for "drug-allergies" (77%), "drug-drug interactions" (60%), and "drug-dose support" (59%); however, a minority of hospitals had functionality related to "drug-laboratory interactions" (28%), "clinical guidelines" (18%), or "clinical reminders" (11%).

3.3. Impact of introduction of EHRs and EDISs

Respondents were asked to describe how EHR or EDIS implementation had affected patient care (improved, no change, or worsened). As presented in Table 5, the survey shows that the directors felt that EHRs and EDISs improved information sharing (95.1% \pm 1.7%; mean \pm SD), providing explanations (82.7% \pm 3.0%), access to previous patient information (81.6% \pm 3.4%), and medical safety (73.4% \pm 3.7%), but that time spent on medical records (36.9% \pm 3.9%) and overall medical care (31.4% \pm 3.7%) were worsening.

Table 3
Use of comprehensive and basic EHR according to hospital characteristics

	Total respondents (n = 215)		
	EHR in ED (n = 47)		No EHR in ED (n = 40)
	Comprehensive EHR (n = 9)	Basic EHR (n = 45)	EHR for inpatient/outpatient departments (n = 11)
	% of hospitals		
Size			
Small (<100 beds)	0	50.0 \pm 28.9	0
Medium (100-399 beds)	4.5 \pm 3.2	75.0 \pm 6.6	4.5 \pm 3.2
Large (\geq 400 beds)	4.9 \pm 1.8	76.3 \pm 3.6	6.9 \pm 2.1
Ownership			
National	3.1 \pm 3.1	68.8 \pm 8.3	12.5 \pm 5.9
Municipal	2.1 \pm 2.1	80.9 \pm 5.8	6.4 \pm 3.6
Public	4.2 \pm 2.9	85.4 \pm 5.1	2.1 \pm 2.1
Private	4.4 \pm 2.5	70.6 \pm 5.6	5.9 \pm 2.9
Teaching status			
Teaching	5.0 \pm 1.6	77.7 \pm 3.1	5.6 \pm 1.7
Nonteaching	0	30.0 \pm 15.3	0
Medical facility classification			
Tertiary care	4.5 \pm 2.0	72.3 \pm 42.4	6.3 \pm 2.3
Secondary care	4.5 \pm 2.2	79.5 \pm 4.3	5.7 \pm 2.5

t4:1 **Table 4**
t4:2 Functionality of EHR system in the ED

t4:3	Fully implemented in ED	Implementation within 1 year	Implementation under consideration	No implementation, with no plan to implement
t4:4	% of hospitals			
t4:5	Ryota 2014-04-18 04:54:37			
t4:5	Clinical documentation			
t4:6	97.7			
t4:7	97.1			
t4:8	96.6	0.6		
t4:9	97.1			
t4:10	97.7			
t4:11	97.7			
t4:12	73.1	0.6	1.1	
t4:13	CPOE			
t4:14	97.7			
t4:15	97.7			
t4:16	97.7			
t4:17	96.0		0.6	
t4:18	97.7			
t4:19	97.7			
t4:20	95.4		0.6	1.1
t4:21	88.0		1.7	6.9
t4:22	Test and imaging results			
t4:23	97.7			
t4:24	97.1			
t4:25	97.1			
t4:26	93.1	0.6	1.1	2.9
t4:27	94.3	0.6	1.1	1.1
t4:28	97.1			
t4:29	94.9	0.6	1.1	0.6
t4:30	95.4			1.7
t4:31	CDSS			
t4:32	17.7	1.1	8.0	66.3
t4:33	11.4	1.1	8.0	68.6
t4:34	76.6		7.4	12.0
t4:35	60.0	0.6	6.9	25.7
t4:36	28.0		8.0	56.6
t4:37	59.4		5.1	30.3

Q3 Abbreviations: CT, computed tomography; MRI, magnetic resonance imaging; ECG, electrocardiogram.

- t4:38 ^a Age, sex, address, etc.
- t4:40 ^b Do not resuscitate.
- t4:41 ^c For example, call order.
- t4:42 ^d For example, echocardiogram.
- t4:43 ^e For example, β blockers after myocardial infarction.
- t4:44 ^f For example, pneumococcal vaccine.
- t4:45 ^g For example, digoxin and low level of serum potassium.
- t4:46 ^h For example, renal dose guidance.

202 **3.4. Barriers to EHR-EDIS transition**

203 Among hospitals with EHRs, the most commonly cited barriers to
204 transitioning to EDIS from EHR were inadequate capital for purchas-

ing the system, concerns about maintenance costs, and future support 205
from the providers (Table 6). Among ED practices, the most cited 206
barrier to implementation was potential adverse effects on workflow 207
(P b .0001). 208

t5:1 **Table 5**
t5:2 Impact of introduction of EHR system

t5:3	EHR in ED (n = 171)				EDIS in ED (n = 4)			
	Improved	No change	Worsened	P	Improved	No change	Worsened	P
t5:4	% of hospitals							
t5:5	Ryota 2014-04-18 04:51:41							
t5:6	Effects on medical care in ED							
t5:7	Clinical documentation							
t5:8	36.9±3.9	29.2±3.6	33.8±3.8		0			
t5:9	CPOE							
t5:10	57.2±3.9	28.9±3.6	13.8±2.7		66.7±33.3			
t5:11	CDSS							
t5:12	73.4±3.7	25.9±3.6	0.7±0.7		100			
t5:13	Others							
t5:14	31.4±3.7	48.1±4.0	20.5±3.2		0			
t5:15	81.6±3.4	7.3±2.1	11.0±2.5		100			
t5:16	82.7±3.0	16.0±2.9	1.2±0.9		100			
t5:17	95.1±1.7	3.7±1.5	1.2±0.9		100			

t6:1 **Table 6**
t6:2 Perceived barriers regarding the adoption of EDIS for hospitals with and without EHR

t6:3		EHR in ED	P
t6:4		Score (mean \pm SD)	
t6:5	Barriers ^a		
t6:6	Cost		.145
t6:7	The amount of capital needed to purchase and implement an EDIS	1.8 \pm 0.4	
t6:8	Concerns about the ongoing cost of maintaining an EDIS	1.7 \pm 0.5	
t6:9	Concerns about a lack of future support from vendors in upgrading	1.7 \pm 0.5	
t6:10	ED practice		b.0001
t6:11	Resistance to implementation from ED physicians	0.6 \pm 0.7	
t6:12	Resistance to implementation from other staff (eg, RNs, NPs, PAs)	0.8 \pm 0.7	
t6:13	Concerns about adverse effects on workflow	1.1 \pm 0.7	
t6:14	Introducing EDIS		.589
t6:15	Lack of interoperable IT systems on the market	1.3 \pm 0.7	
t6:16	Lack of adequate IT staff when trouble occurs	1.6 \pm 0.6	
t6:17	Finding an EHR that meets hospital needs	1.2 \pm 0.7	
t6:18	Data privacy		.956
t6:19	Concerns about inappropriate disclosure of patient information	1.2 \pm 0.8	
t6:20	Concerns about illegal record tampering or "hacking"	1.2 \pm 0.8	

Abbreviations: RNs, registered nurses; NPs, nurse practitioners; PAs, physician assistants; IT, information technology.

t6:21 ^a In hospitals with EHR, we asked the extent to which these items were a barrier in adopting EDIS. Possible multiple-choice responses to each item were 2, "major barrier;" 1,
t6:22 "minor barrier;" and 0, "not a barrier."

209 3.5. Expectations regarding EDIS functionality

210 As shown in Table 7, hospitals without EHRs in the ED had
211 significantly higher expectations than those with EHR for a system
212 developed exclusively for use in the ED setting ($P = .0018$). In
213 addition, hospitals with EHR in their EDs had higher expectations for
214 showing appropriate clinical guidelines for residents ($P = .033$).

215 4. Discussion

216 To the best of our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive
217 national survey of EHRs and EDISs in Japanese hospitals to explore
218 barriers to and expectations for EDISs implementation in hospitals
219 with existing EHRs. First, the current survey identified that only 9
220 hospitals (4.2%) had comprehensive EHR, and only 4 hospitals (1.9%)
221 had EDIS. Second, ED directors reported that the introduction of EHR
222 did not change the time required to create medical records and did
223 not reduce overall clinic hours. Finally, the survey also revealed that
224 the most common barriers against transitioning to EDIS from EHR
225 were cost and potential adverse effects on workflow. However, ED
226 physicians expect that EHR-EDIS transition will provide clinical
227 guidelines for resident physicians.

228 4.1. Adoption of EHRs and EDISs in Japan

229 Although most hospitals surveyed had EHR, very few had compre-
230 hensive EHR. Our analysis also revealed that most hospitals in Japan with
231 a fully implemented EHR in the ED do not have efficient CDSS. This low
232 prevalence may be the result of a previous ban on selling separate CDSS
233 software and that CDSS functionality such as flagging drug-laboratory

interactions, providing clinical guidelines, and clinical reminders were 234
seldom present. Although most nonparticipating hospitals have no plans 235
to adopt these features in the near future, the Ministry of Health, Labour 236
and Welfare lifted the ban on the sale of separate CDSS software in 237
February 2013; this may boost the development of CDSS software and 238
increase its use. In contrast, the advantages of CPOE were well 239
understood early on in Japan, spurring the adoption of this function 240
[23]. Today, CPOE has a higher rate of adoption in Japan [24]. 241
Consequently, comprehensive EHR should increase in Japan. 242

243 4.2. Impact of introducing EHRs

According to the present survey, hospitals recognized that although 244
CPOE shortened time for imaging and laboratory orders and CDSS 245
improved medical safety in emergency care, it did not lead to a noticeable 246
change in the time required to create medical records or overall clinic 247
hours after the introduction of EHR. A previous study showed that 248
physicians did not expect that EHR would decrease documentation time 249
in ED settings [25], but emergency physicians would expect this function 250
[26]. Our study showed that hospitals without EHR in the ED had 251
significantly higher expectations for a system developed exclusively for 252
use in ED than hospitals with EHR, suggesting that they have more 253
expectations for this function. Thus, emergency physicians and providers 254
should match the expectation by specifically focusing on systems that 255
decrease the time required to create medical records. 256

257 4.3. Barriers to the EHR-EDIS transition

The survey identified that, among hospitals with EHR, the most 258
commonly cited barriers to introducing an EDIS system were 259

t7:1 **Table 7**
t7:2 Expectations regarding the adoption of EDIS for hospitals with and without EHR

t7:3		EHR	No EHR	P
t7:4		Score (mean \pm SD)	Score (mean \pm SD)	
t7:5	Expected functions ^a			
t7:6	Allows for cooperation with other facilities	2.3 \pm 0.9	2.2 \pm 0.9	.55
t7:7	EHR was developed exclusively for EDs	1.5 \pm 1.1	2.1 \pm 1.0	.0018
t7:8	Provides explanation sheets to patients (eg, exercise caution after head trauma)	2.0 \pm 0.9	2.0 \pm 0.9	.95
t7:9	Clinical decision support system (eg, drug-overdose alerts)	2.3 \pm 0.8	2.4 \pm 0.8	.65
t7:10	Provides clinical guidelines for resident physicians	2.2 \pm 0.9	1.9 \pm 0.9	.033

t7:11 ^a Hospitals were asked to identify desired functions in EDIS. Possible multiple-choice responses to each item were 3, "essential;" 2, "very desirable;" 1, "desirable;" and 0, "not
t7:12 needed."

Please cite this article as: Inokuchi R, et al, Motivations and barriers to implementing electronic health records and ED information systems in Japan, Am J Emerg Med (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2014.03.035>

inadequate funding for the initial purchase and maintenance costs. Importantly, we also found that they believed that the transition of EHR to EDIS would have a negative effect on workflow. These negative findings may indicate a failure to attend to workflow changes created by the system, which may have severe consequences in an ED [27]. For example, Han et al [28] reported an increase in mortality after the introduction of EHR, and an Australian study found a significant increase in patient waiting times, treatment time, and total time to discharge patients after the implementation of an EDIS created in the United States [29]. Thus, it is important to develop EDISs to match each ED, including country.

4.4. Expectations regarding the functions of EDISs

Hospitals without EHR in the ED had significantly higher expectations for a system developed exclusively for use in the ED setting. This is important to note because it suggests that these hospitals would not implement their present EHRs in their EDs. In addition, hospitals with EHRs in their EDs have higher expectations for showing appropriate clinical guidelines for residents to make better use of their systems. Thus, for an EDIS to be successfully adopted in a hospital without EHR, its integration into routine clinical workflow within the ED must require no extra work on the part of clinicians [30,31]; providing appropriate clinical guidelines for residents would strongly stimulate EDIS adoption by hospitals with EHRs.

5. Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First, we achieved only a 46.1% response rate, and the hospitals that did not respond to our survey were somewhat different from those that did respond. We found no significant hospital size difference between the hospitals that did and did not respond to our survey. However, because this survey was completed anonymously, it was difficult for us to follow the nonrespondents. According to the supplemental small-scale phone interviews after the survey, we have an impression that nonresponder hospitals tended not to have EHR systems, compared with those responding; therefore, we cannot deny the presence of some selection bias. Namely, the true prevalence of EHRs and EDISs might be lower than our results. Second, we did not ascertain whether EHR users were satisfied with them. Finally, few hospitals in our sample had EDISs in place that had been developed exclusively for ED use. There may not be enough information on the characteristics that predict EDIS adoption. We recommend that this portion of the study be repeated again with hospitals having EDIS in place, to gain a better understanding of the ED characteristics associated with EDIS adoption.

6. Conclusion

We found that very few hospitals have comprehensive EHR systems or EDIS in Japan. As EHR-EDIS transitions become faster, providers and emergency physicians together should focus on developments that decrease cost, shorten the time to create medical records, and incorporate clinical guidelines.

Acknowledgments

We thank the physicians who participated in the survey and Ms Takako Sakamaki, who assisted with data collection. Finally, we thank the Japanese Association of Healthcare Information Systems for providing data.

Appendix. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2014.03.035>.

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Supplemental file A

Supplemental file B

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