

Preface

What is a hospital information system? The literature defines hospital information systems in many different ways and presents various views. Some articles focus on information processing functions, while others focus on the technology used. To begin with, we understand a hospital information system as the information processing and information storing subsystem of a hospital.

This book discusses the significance of information processing in hospitals, the progress in information and communication technology, and the importance of systematic information management. Nearly all people working in a hospital have an enormous demand for information, which has to be fulfilled in order to achieve high-quality and efficient patient care. The management of a hospital needs up-to-date information about the hospital's costs and services. The quality of information processing is also important for the competitiveness of a hospital. Hospital information systems can be regarded as the memory and nervous system of a hospital.

The subject of information processing is quite complex. Nearly all groups and all areas in a hospital depend on the quality of information processing. The amount of information processing is tremendous. Additionally, the information needs of the different groups are often based on the same data. Therefore, integrated information processing is necessary. If hospital information systems are not systematically managed and operated, they tend to develop chaotically. This, in turn, leads to negative consequences, such as low data quality and increasing costs of patient care.

Well-educated health informatics specialists, with the knowledge and skills to systematically manage and operate hospital information systems, are therefore needed to appropriately and responsibly apply information and communication technology to the complex information processing environment of a hospital.

This book discusses hospital information systems and their systematic management. Information management comprises those activities in a hospital that deal with the management of information processing and therefore with the management of its hospital information system.

The goal of this book is to introduce healthcare and health informatics professionals, as well as students in medical informatics/health informatics

and health information management, to the strategic management of hospital information systems. The book should be regarded as an introduction to this complex subject. For a deeper understanding, the reader will need additional knowledge and, foremost, practice in this field.

After reading this book, a reader should be able to answer the following questions:

- Why is systematic information processing in hospitals important?
- What do hospital information systems look like?
- What are good hospital information systems?
- How can we strategically manage hospital information systems?

We hope that the reader will find this book useful. Any comments on it or suggestions for improvements are warmly welcome.

Reinhold Haux
Alfred Winter
Elske Ammenwerth
Birgit Brigl

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