Ethical Issues in Internetable Health Care

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Background. Medical informatics is becoming a well-known source of interesting and important ethical and social issues.[1] These issues range from confidentiality and health services research to decision support and system evaluation. The extraordinarily rapid growth of the Internet for acquisition, storage, retrieval, and analysis of health data commands attention as a locus of a number of exciting ethical challenges.

This panel addresses ethical issues and controversies associated with the evolution of the Internet as a repository and communication medium for health data. The panel, sponsored by AMIA's new Working Group on Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues, has the goal of stimulating open discussion and debate.

Key Issues. Issues to be discussed include the following:

- Questions related to Internet and web-based resources, including confidentiality, peer review, data management, consumer health informatics and challenges for community health information networks (CHINs).

- The use of electronic mail between and among health professions and patients, especially matters regarding security and confidentiality.

- Problems related to data collection, storage and retrieval between nations and by international organizations.

- New concerns related to genetics and the Internet, including appropriate use of genetic data, the possibility of ethnic and racial stigma, and ethically optimized research as the digitization of genetic information reshapes bioinformatics.

Additionally, the panel will (i) feature an introduction to the Ethics Working Group's case collection project, an effort to compile case studies that illustrate core ethical issues and challenges in health informatics, and (ii) encourage participants to contribute materials to this educational effort, which began at the AMIA 1997 Spring Symposium in San Jose, California.

Reference

1. Goodman KW, ed. *Ethics, Computing and Medicine: Informatics and the Transformation of Health Care*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.