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Online Survey of Consumer Health Information Privacy in Korea

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Abstract and objective

Health information should be acquired, disclosed and used only in ways that respect consumer's privacy & rights. The online survey on the consumers' attitudes towards health information privacy was done, and revealed the unique result that is somewhat different from Americans'. The consumers' need should be incorporated to the constitution.

Keywords:

privacy, consumer, health information

Introduction

Korean government recently announced that the master plan for the National Health Information Infrastructure will be on the way, and will set the Health Information Privacy Protection Law which is in equivalent to the HIPAA as soon as possible. The purposes of this research are: to survey the consumers' opinions about the health information privacy, to understand the consumers' privacy-protective behaviors out of the concern about the privacy breaches, to know the consumers' recognition about the constitution of the health information privacy law, to know the consumers' willingness to share their personal medical information.

Methods

The authors conducted the online survey. The questionnaire developed and conducted by the California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF) on "National Consumer Health Privacy Survey" was translated into Korean and reviewed by the authors to conform to the Korean situation. It was made as an online survey form, and uploaded, solicited the participation of the website visitors of a tertiary teaching hospital in Korea, and 281 responses were collected online. The results were analyzed for the descriptive statistics.

Results

- Consumers concerned about the privacy of their personal health information. 79% were concerned about the privacy, and this was higher percentage than the US consumers' which was 67%.
- Recent privacy breaches have raised the level of concern. 56% of Korean respondents were aware of such privacy breaches, which was also higher than that of the US consumers' of 24%.
- Consumers are unfamiliar with health information privacy law. Only 37% were aware of the related law, and 80% didn't have a chance of notification that there are such laws.
- Consumers think that the paper medical records are more secure than electronic medical records.
- Employees concern about the misuse of medical claim information. Sixty percent of the respondents concerned about the disclosure of their medical information to their employers.
- Privacy-protective behaviors exist, however, not so much as US consumers. Not so many Korean consumers practice the privacy-protective behaviors even though they worry about the misuse of the health information.
- Consumers will share their personal medical information with limited others such as family members and physicians involved in their care. In contrast, they are not willing to share their health information with drug companies, government agencies or employers.

Conclusions

Most of the consumers answered that the information could be shared when necessary, however, the ownership and the right to decide the disclosure should belong to patient, and patient should be allowed to access their own information with certain degree of regulation. These kind of awareness were strengthened by the implementation of EHR. In detail comparative analysis between Korean and American consumers' attitudes will be done if the American data be available.