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"Digital health can play a significant role in helping healthcare organizations meet the standards set by accrediting bodies"

Oracle Cerner is a leading provider of digital information systems used within hospitals and health systems to enable medical professionals to deliver better healthcare to individual patients and communities. "Hospitals" Magazine had the pleasure to meet with Akram Sami, Vice President and Managing Director, Oracle Cerner, Middle East and Africa to discuss the role of digital information systems, the role of technology in hospital quality management among other issues. Below is the full interview:

What is the role of digital information systems in improving healthcare systems and getting them closer to receiving international accreditation programs?

Healthcare administrators and caregivers who access patient and population health data can make crucial decisions about care that could make all the difference to their patients. The benefits of a digital information system in improving the healthcare landscape are limitless – these include improved patient safety, clinician experience, operational excellence, and financial outcomes. Accessing the right health data at the right time depends on health information systems (HISs), which seamlessly and intelligently integrate healthcare with information technology. An HIS is designed to provide insights into commonly used treatments or interventions that are linked with the best outcomes.

In addition, doctors and nurses use HISs to make informed data-driven decisions regarding various facets of patient care. For example, quick access to patient medical histories can bring previous treatments to light. These systems are also invaluable to administrators, who can analyze statistics about different departments or procedures to better allocate the organization's resources.

Additional areas where digital technology has made an enormous impact on healthcare include:

Big data: For those conducting studies, research, or clinical trials, digital technology allows for the instant collection of data from a much more diverse and larger population. Also, access to big data allows clinicians to identify risk factors and recommend appropriate preventive/intervention steps more effectively.

Improved lines of communication:
Doctors can stay in touch with their patients through email, smartphones, text messaging,

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etc. Teleconferencing has made it easy to communicate beyond geographic borders.

Telemedicine/Telehealth: Not only is telehealth cost-effective, but it can also help determine who needs emergency assistance. Today, doctors often deliver counseling via telehealth for patients who are not able to physically come to their clinic.

Adopting various technological advancements can benefit and improve the functioning of the hospital, helping with quality management and accreditation. Tools that allow schedulers to maximize the bookings of a specialist or primary care provider can increase the volumes of patients seen. Other tools around the management of how patients are referred can also improve the function of the hospital.

There are no shortages of digital solutions available in the current climate. In the context of accreditation, digital health can play a significant role in helping healthcare organizations meet the standards set by accrediting bodies. For example, the use of electronic health records (EHRs) can help organizations demonstrate that they are meeting standards related to the documentation and management of patient information, as well as standards related to the security and confidentiality of that information.

Telemedicine can also be used to help organizations meet standards related to access to care, as it allows patients to receive care remotely, which can be especially useful in rural or underserved areas. Overall, the integration of digital health technologies can help healthcare organizations improve the quality and safety of the care they provide, as well as increase efficiency and reduce costs. As such, these technologies can be an important consideration in the accreditation process.

Even though the adoption of digital systems can enhance patient safety, it can sometimes lead to medical errors when used or implemented poorly; how do you deal with such an issue?

The potential to improve patient safety exists through the use of medication alerts, clinical

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reminders, better tracking and reporting, clinical decision support, and the availability of complete patient data. The role of digital systems or health IT in improving a patient's safety extends beyond the four walls of a hospital. The system helps increase patient engagement as consumers of healthcare. This allows patients access to their medical records, which helps them to feel more knowledgeable about their conditions and encourages them to actively participate in shared decision-making. Moreover, it can improve follow-up for missed appointments, consultations, and diagnostic testing. A healthcare provider can search for specific cohorts of patients to monitor and improve adherence to indicated healthcare conditions, for example, chronic disease management.

There are several ways to address issues of patient safety in EHRs:

Implement comprehensive training programs: It is important that healthcare providers and staff are trained on how to use EHRs properly and effectively. This can help reduce the risk of errors or omissions in the EHR and improve the overall quality and safety of care.

Implement robust quality improvement processes: Regularly reviewing and analyzing EHR data can help identify any issues or trends that may be affecting patient safety. This can include analyzing data on adverse events, errors, or other safety concerns, and implementing corrective actions as needed.

Use clinical decision support systems: These systems use algorithms and data to provide real-time recommendations for treatment and care based on best practices and guidelines. This can help improve the safety of care by ensuring that providers are making informed decisions based on the latest evidence and recommendations.

Establish robust security and confidentiality protocols: It is important to ensure that EHRs are secure and that patient

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information is kept confidential. This can include implementing strong passwords, enabling two-factor authentication, and regularly reviewing and updating security protocols to ensure they are effective.

Involve patients and families in the care process: Encouraging patients and families to be actively involved in their own care can help improve patient safety by promoting collaboration and communication between patients and providers. This can include providing patients with access to their own EHRs and encouraging them to ask questions and raise concerns.

There is a litany of technology available to further ease the burden of record-keeping for clinicians. Even something as simple as using a patient portal, where patients can access their individual medical records, lab results, medication lists, schedule follow-up appointments, etc. can make a measurable difference in how the safety and quality of their care affect patients. Quality management is a prime field for the use of technology to make healthcare better for not only patients but for organizations and their financial status as well.

What is the role of technology in hospital quality management?

The use of technology in hospital quality management and accreditation quality is a continuous process, as it involves assessing and aiming to improve a hospital's functionality. The management committee should understand, collaborate on, and commit to solving any problem that arises in the hospital and its efficiency. Quality management is a complex field with its own experts and specific needs.

A common need is a robust reporting platform that leverages the latest technology to pull the right information at the right time – a key component of any quality management program for a hospital. This is just one example of how technology can positively impact quality management for hospitals.

We are hearing about the digital health accreditation system being used as a new

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accreditation program for hospitals; can you tell us your thoughts about this?

There are several accreditation programs that focus on digital health and the use of technology in healthcare. These programs typically aim to ensure that healthcare organizations are using digital technologies in a way that is safe, effective, and compliant with relevant regulations and standards.

Some dimensions involving digital health accreditation programs include:

EHR accreditation programs: These programs provide accreditation for healthcare organizations that use EHRs and other digital health technologies. They assess organizations on a variety of criteria, including the functionality, interoperability, and security of their EHR systems.

Telemedicine accreditation programs: These provide accreditation for healthcare organizations that use telemedicine to deliver care. They assess organizations on a variety of criteria, including the quality of care, patient safety, and the effectiveness of the telemedicine program.

Digital health accreditation: Similar to ones developed by the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), these programs provide accreditation for healthcare organizations that use digital technologies to improve the quality and safety of care. They assess organizations on a variety of criteria, including the integration of digital technologies into clinical processes, the impact of those technologies on patient outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of the digital health program.

Overall, these and other digital health accreditation programs can help healthcare organizations demonstrate that they are using digital technologies in a way that meets high standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

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