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Georgia Southern Studies LHDs Partners and Challenges in Electronic Exchange of Health Information

October 28, 2016



Unprecedented amounts of data are produced by the health care and other sectors, presenting opportunities for local health departments (LHDs) to access these data. LHDs will need to participate in health information exchange (HIE) with a number of partners in order to benefit from these data resources. LHDs' participation in HIEs with specific partners has not been studied.

The 2015 Informatics capacity and Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, on behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). This study describes the level of and challenges in LHD participation in HIE with other partners, and variation by LHD population size and governance type.

This research uses data from the 2015 Informatics Capacity and Needs Assessment Survey, with a target population of all LHDs in the United States. A representative sample of 650 LHDs was drawn using a stratified random sampling design. A total of 324 completed responses were received with a 50% response rate. Survey data were cleaned, and bivariate comparisons were conducted using χ and Somer's D.

Substantial variation existed in LHDs' participation in HIE by type of exchange partner. Although 71% participated in HIE with the state departments of health, only 12% with jail/correctional health, 14% with health or county-based purchasing plans, and 15% with home health agencies. Compared with large LHDs (jurisdiction populations of $\geq 500,000$), smaller LHDs were more likely to participate in HIE with state departments of health, but less likely with other exchange partners. The challenges to HIE participation were technological, and organizational/interorganizational in nature and variation existed by LHDs' population size and governance structure with respect to state authority.

In conclusion, Local public health agencies more commonly participate in HIE with some partners, but may need to improve HIE with many others. National strategies targeting an increase in HIE of LHDs may use our findings to focus those initiatives.

The study titled "[Local Health Departments' Partners and Challenges in Electronic Exchange of Health Information](#)," was published in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice.

Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University was the lead author.

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Georgia Southern Studies the Interoperability of Information Systems Managed and Used by LHDs

October 28, 2016



In the post-Affordable Care Act era marked by interorganizational collaborations and availability of large amounts of electronic data from other community partners, it is imperative to assess the interoperability of information systems used by the local health departments (LHDs).

The 2015 Informatics capacity and Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, on behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). This study describes the level of interoperability of LHD information systems and identify factors associated with lack of interoperability.

This mixed-methods research uses data from the 2015 Informatics Capacity and Needs Assessment Survey, with a target population of all LHDs in the United States. A representative sample of 650 LHDs was drawn using a stratified random sampling design. A total of 324 completed responses were received (50% response rate). Qualitative data were used from a key informant interview study of LHD informatics staff from across the United States. Qualitative data were independently coded by 2 researchers and analyzed thematically. Survey data were cleaned, bivariate comparisons were conducted, and a multivariable logistic regression was run to characterize factors associated with interoperability.

For 30% of LHDs, no systems were interoperable, and 38% of LHD respondents indicated some of the systems were interoperable. Significant determinants of interoperability included LHDs having leadership support (adjusted odds ratio [AOR] = 3.54), control of information technology budget allocation (AOR = 2.48), control of data systems (AOR = 2.31), having a strategic plan for information systems (AOR = 1.92), and existence of business process analysis and redesign (AOR = 1.49).

In conclusion, interoperability of all systems may be an informatics goal, but only a small proportion of LHDs reported having interoperable systems, pointing to a substantial need among LHDs nationwide.

The study titled "[Interoperability of Information Systems Managed and Used by the Local Health Departments](#)," was published in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.

Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University was the lead author.

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