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Connecting the national electronic prescription system with an electronic medical records system: targets and potentials within the period of austerity

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Background & Aim: An Electronic Medical Records (EMR) System was used for research purposes in general practice offices in Crete as a joint effort of the Medical Faculty, University of Crete and the Cretan Primary Care based Research Network. Its connection and interaction with the National Electronic Prescription System (NEPS) has been achieved since the end of 2015. Information from prescriptions and orders can be used to provide decision support and training to the physicians that use the EMR.

Method: A connection to the NEPS through the Application Programming Interface (API) was developed. The information from prescriptions and orders is processed by the EMR. An API connection to a widely used website -www.galinos.gr- that offers drugs' information and interactions evaluation was developed. A web browser was embedded in the EMR with the aim to offer to the users (general practitioners) screening questionnaires, relevant medical information, national guidelines and assistance for decision support for selected chronic diseases. Problems encountered on the use of this EMR system and doctors' performance were recorded and analyzed.

Results: The time needed to perform prescriptions and examination orders was decreased. Adoption of the EMR was greater when prescribing staff was included. The use of medical questionnaires was facilitated and increased the available data in the Cretan research network. Drugs' interactions information was less used than other forms of decision support based on national guidelines. Software for querying the NEPS data was the most demanded feature. Different requests were also recorded for future implementation among similar health units.

Conclusions: Incorporating the prescription process in the available EMR system can improve adoption of the EMR and seems to be an important source of information for decision support tools, while the updated EMR is anticipated to improve quality of health care services and have an impact of physicians' performance.