

Push towards digital medicine could lead to patient-safety errors

On behalf of [Raymond Slomski](#)

Doctors say move towards electronic patient records is going too quickly

The federal government says it will soon begin penalizing doctors that do not use electronic patient records, according to USA Today. The penalties are part of a push by Health and Human Services (HHS) towards digital medicine, which it says will lead to greater efficiency and better patient safety. However, many medical groups are warning that the rapid pace of digitization is coming despite potential risks posed by electronic record keeping to patients. Many doctors insist that the technology is not yet developed enough and that the rapid pace of change could lead to [medical errors](#).

Electronic patient records

HHS has so far offered medical professionals about \$30 billion in incentives to digitize patient records, which the government argues will allow for improved efficiency, fewer mistakes, and greater communication between health care systems.

While most people in the medical profession agree that digitization will eventually lead to greater patient safety, they say the move is happening before the technology is fully developed. Recently, 37 medical societies wrote to the HHS expressing their concerns about the rapid move towards electronic medical records. Critics say the HHS has been cherry picking studies to support its claims about the benefits of digital medicine while ignoring studies that have exposed potential drawbacks.

New risks

A federal survey, for example, found that 15 percent of doctors blamed electronic records for leading them to choose the [incorrect medication](#) or lab order for a patient. Other studies have shown that the technology, which is designed to alert doctors to potential medical issues for specific patients, like allergies to prescription medication, often fail to work and are difficult to operate.

Digital medicine may also create indirect problems concerning patient safety. According to the

Herald-News, for example, many doctors' offices do not have adequate cybersecurity measures in place to prevent digital theft of patients' records. Doctors also complain that the new rules surrounding digital records have led them to spending more time entering data than attending to patients, which could ultimately lead to a compromise in patient care.

Medical malpractice

Patients expect and deserve the best possible care from their doctors and other medical professionals. However, it is clear there are plenty of opportunities for mistakes or negligence to arise, which can lead to patient injuries.

A medical malpractice attorney can assist any patient who may have been the victim of a doctor's negligence. Patient safety should always be the central focus of any health care facility and a qualified attorney can help ensure medical staff are held to the necessary standards.