

# The Role of Health Informatics in Enhancing Dental Care Delivery and Patient Outcomes

Dalal Mohammed Alharthi<sup>1</sup>, Hala Muslih Alanazi<sup>2</sup>, Azizah Salam Mohammed Alanazi<sup>3</sup>, Hessah Munahi Alotaibi<sup>4</sup>, Ahlam Sulaiman Alhwiti<sup>5</sup>, Roweda Eid Alatawi<sup>5</sup>, Nashmia Faleh Albalawi<sup>5</sup>, Sultan Mohammed Almuslamani<sup>6</sup>, Munirah Bunyan Hamad Albalawi<sup>5</sup>, Sami Abdullah Alsakani<sup>7</sup>, Mohammed Obaid Badi Alharbi<sup>7</sup>, Nawaf Hamoud Alotaibi<sup>8</sup>

1. Dental Assistant, Tabuk health cluster.
2. Health Information Technology, Tabuk health cluster.
3. Health informatics technician, Tabuk Health Cluster.
4. Dentist, East Riyadh Dental Center.
5. Dental Assistant, Tabuk health cluster.
6. Health information, Tabuk health cluster.
7. Dental Assistant, Nafi General Hospital.
8. Health Informatics, Nafi General Hospital.

## ABSTRACT

Dental informatics, sometimes referred to as dental computing or dental information science, is a multidisciplinary field that includes data science, information technology, and dental communication systems. It entails creating, putting into practice, and assessing digital tools and technology to enhance the administration, analysis, and application of dental data for patient care, research, and teaching<sup>1</sup>. Because of the expanding accessibility of electronic health records (EHRs), the pervasiveness of digital imaging and other diagnostic tools, and the growing interest in telehealth and mobile health applications, dental informatics has accelerated significantly in recent years. These developments hold great promise for boosting patient care and increasing oral health outcomes, and they have completely changed the field of dentistry practice, research, and education.

**KEYWORDS:** Health Informatics, Enhancing, Dental Care Delivery, Patient Outcomes.

## 1. Introduction

The study and pursuit of efficient applications of biomedical data, information, and knowledge for scientific investigation, problem-solving, and decision-making, driven by initiatives to enhance human health, is known as health informatics. Stated differently, it is the study of information, where information is defined as meaningful data (Bichel-Findlay et al., 2022).

Clinical informatics is the most pertinent subspecialty for healthcare professionals. Clinical informatics is an interprofessional field that combines information technology, behavioral management concepts, and medical practice. Clinical informatics is a useful field that enhances patient outcomes, develops medical

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research, and raises the value of healthcare delivery rather of being a strict academic or technical endeavor. The secret to achieving these objectives is realizing that the effectiveness of technology design and integration into current institutional workflows, legislative frameworks, and cultural norms—rather than technological prowess—determines the successful evolution of health care (Bichel-Findlay et al., 2022).

Public health informatics, or PHI, is the methodical application of information, computer science, and technology in public health domains like preparation, preventative measures, monitoring, and health promotion. By changing the elements that increase the population's risk, PHI is primarily used to prevent illnesses and injuries and to promote population health, which will ultimately improve individual health. Essentially, PHI collects, examines, and responds to public health data using informatics. PHI is distinct from other areas of informatics since it focuses heavily on preventing population illnesses, employs a variety of treatments to accomplish its objectives, and functions in governmental settings (Aziz, 2016).

By making it easier to gather, store, and analyze massive and intricate dental datasets, dental informatics has completely transformed the area of dental research. Researchers may now obtain and analyze dental data more quickly and on a larger scale than previously conceivable thanks to the growing availability of EHRs and other digital tools. Significant progress in dentistry research has resulted from this, including the creation of predictive models for assessing disease risk, the discovery of patterns and trends in the results of oral health, and the assessment of the efficacy of different treatment approaches (Islam et al., 2018).

Precision dentistry, which uses individualized and data-driven methods for diagnosis, treatment planning, and monitoring of oral health issues, has also advanced as a result of dental informatics. Researchers and clinicians can create risk prediction models, treatment algorithms, and decision support systems that take patient-specific aspects including genetic, environmental, and behavioral factors into account by utilizing dental informatics. This will result in more focused and efficient interventions (Islam et al., 2018).

## **2. Literature review**

The conceptualization, design, development, deployment, improvement, upkeep, and assessment of public health-related communication, surveillance, and information systems are all included in the field of public health informatics (PHI). One of the best tools for dealing with bioterrorism, natural catastrophes, epidemics, and disease surveillance may be PHI. The use of computerized global surveillance and data collection systems, such as health data organization and health information exchange (HIE), may facilitate population-level monitoring. This could mitigate the negative consequences of a worldwide outbreak (Aziz, 2016).

Since then, there have been notable improvements in patient education and health outcomes as well as improvements in the quality of health care delivery, which can be partially attributed to the development of informatics and information systems.

Informatics aims to increase interoperability and close the gap between data collection and data utilization in patient care. The advent of electronic health records has greatly enhanced provider-to-provider communication (Hill et al., 2020).

The power of data is fueled by knowledge and comprehension of data processes, which offer a solid balance between the delivery of healthcare and health care information. The use of health informatics offers the skills and resources required to make the most of this information overload, leading to the greatest caliber of healthcare service, enhanced access, and reduced costs (Hill et al., 2020).

## 1. Biomedical Informatics and Bioinformatics

A crucial subfield of health informatics, biomedical informatics uses concepts from both biochemistry and the natural sciences to direct scientific and medical research. To improve research skills, this discipline frequently makes use of cutting-edge technology like cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI). Biomedical informatics can offer greater insights into intricate biological processes and disease mechanisms by combining these cutting-edge technologies, which could ultimately result in ground-breaking discoveries. For example, AI algorithms can speed up scientific research by analyzing large datasets to find patterns and correlations that would be difficult for humans to notice (Wang et al., 2024).

Utilizing computer systems to facilitate genetic and genomics research is the focus of the closely related science of bioinformatics. This field has a great deal of promise for identifying molecular patterns of illness and human health, which could have a big impact on medication development and repurposing. Bioinformatics makes it possible to create customized medical treatments based on a person's genetic profile by evaluating genomic data. In addition to increasing treatment effectiveness, this individualized strategy lowers the possibility of side effects, improving patient outcomes overall. Precision medicine, in which therapies are specifically customized for each patient based on their genetic composition, is made possible by the use of bioinformatics into healthcare (Wang et al., 2024).

## 2. Impact of dental informatics on clinical practice

Clinical practice is one of the key areas where dental informatics has made a big difference. By using electronic health records (EHRs), dental professionals may now more easily document, maintain, and share patient data, which enhances coordination, communication, and continuity of care. In order to promote standardized and evidence-based care, EHRs have also made it easier to integrate systems for clinical decision support, which offer evidence-based guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment planning, and monitoring of oral health issues (Chauhan et al., 2018).

Dental treatment is becoming more widely available thanks to telehealth and mobile health apps, especially in underprivileged and isolated places. Emergency situations, follow-up care, and patient education have all benefited greatly from telehealth, which enables remote consultation, diagnosis, and treatment planning. Because they provide individualized and easy solutions for oral health care, mobile health applications—like virtual reality tools for dental anxiety treatment and oral health tracking apps—have also grown in popularity among patients and doctors (Jnr,

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The data required to plan and carry out care is gathered, stored, processed, and transmitted via health information systems. The electronic dental record (EDR), a well-known HIS component, is used by practitioners to record patients' dental and medical histories as well as comprehensive information about consultations. Electronic dentistry records are more than just paper records transferred to an electronic format. Controlling data capture, facilitating data storage and access, assisting with management and administration procedures, and directing public health policies are all made possible by their ideal interoperability with other HIS components. They can be applied to education and research as well (Islam et al., 2018).

### 2.1 Electronic dental records

In order to fully benefit from EDRs, especially in terms of data transfer, aggregation, and reuse, scalable, shareable, and dentistry-specific standardized clinical coding systems (SCCSs) are required. These technologies provide computerized comparisons of the results of various treatments for the same diagnosis and facilitate machine-readable documentation (Ramoni et al., 2017).

Additionally, EDRs are sources of real-world data that can be used in research to produce empirical evidence that can improve patient outcomes, speed up breakthroughs in care, and provide vital insights for daily practice. EDR-based retrospective studies, like other types of retrospective research, do not necessitate the costly and time-consuming processes of patient recruiting or new data gathering (Benoit et al., 2022).

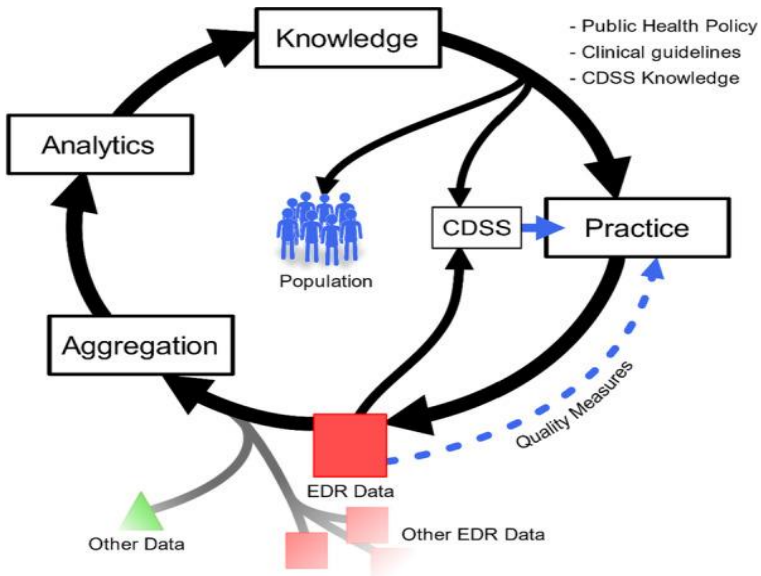


Figure 1. Learning Health Care System (Benoit et al., 2022).

Reusing EDR data is a promising way to save research expenses, support patient-centered research, and accelerate the pace of new medical discoveries, but it is still constrained by issues with data quality. In fact, it is well acknowledged that clinical data are not documented with the same care as research data since clinical practice and research have different agendas. To ensure that the most accurate and comprehensive information is gathered, forms for collecting data that can detect common mistakes and offer real-time feedback are therefore necessary in addition to appropriate ergonomics and workflow integration (Benoit et al., 2022).

## 2.2 Using technology and data management to improve healthcare.

Although many modern dental offices use electronic health record (EHR) systems, adoption of these systems seems to be slower than in medical offices. In an effort to enhance the timely and appropriate delivery of services, health informatics is becoming more and more significant. Despite the tremendous progress in the EHR and the ability to gather, store, and send data, there are still barriers to improving communication between medical and dental platforms (Chauhan et al., 2018).

Another possible benefit of an EHR is its capacity to record and preserve digital images for clinical and radiography purposes. The capabilities of digital intraoral scanners to collect, process, and interpret image data are evolving quickly, and their application in oral health care is growing. New scanners are including technologies for caries diagnosis in addition to analyzing longitudinal data to compare factors like tooth mobility or dental wear. Planning surgical treatment and interventions is made possible by the capacity to combine digital data from various sources, including scanners, photos, and cone-beam computed tomography scans (Rekow, 2019).

In addition to perhaps enhancing treatment results, this data integration can serve as a platform for patient education. Furthermore, robots can be enhanced or surgically performed with the aid of data integration. Cardiology, obstetrics, and oncological care, including head and neck surgery, are among the common medical robotics surgical uses. In 2017, the US Food and Drug Administration approved the first robotic technology to help with dental implant placement by offering visual and tactile guidance. Digital simulators and virtual reality are being used in dental education to give patient-free surgical experiences and feedback to enhance tooth preparation methods (Rekow, 2019).

Data from digital scanners can be connected to 3-D printers, computer-aided design, and computer-aided manufacturing equipment to produce a variety of products, including study models, prosthetics, and restorations. For numerous dental applications, including orthodontics, diagnostics, and the creation of surgical instruments, instruments, and repairs, digital intraoral scanner data can be used in place of analog impression data. Although there are currently no established applications of bioprinting in dental healthcare, there have been exciting developments, such as a variety of methods to bioprint tissues and organoids using these technologies (Jnr, 2020).

## 2.3 How does artificial intelligence impact digital healthcare initiatives

Dental informatics include communication, information management, and the application of new technologies in clinical practice and research. Information

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management in a dental office includes keeping and utilizing data produced during direct patient interaction, appointment scheduling, and dental practice operations. This system serves as an information management system for the dental office. The existence of information systems is a prerequisite for all contemporary human invention. The management and decision-making of the health system require a great deal of information (Mahdi et al., 2022).

Information systems for dental departments are made to store and process vast amounts of data. However, integrating medical evidence regarding the information needs of dentists was the primary obstacle in developing a functional clinical information system (CIS) in dentistry. Additional details regarding a patient's diagnosis and course of therapy are readily available. These systems usually incorporate web-based technology for email communication, Internet search, and promotion, followed by virtual reality instruction and practice (Mahdi et al., 2022).

Doctors and dentists would be able to access patient medical data using standardized dental software. One may contend that a lot of artificial intelligence is utilized to identify diseases with precision comparable to that of medical experts. The two primary ways artificial intelligence has greatly improved dentistry are through dental radiography and AI oral imaging scans. In humans, dental caries is the most common disease. Dental caries prevention, early diagnosis, and prompt treatment remain the primary objectives of the dental profession (Mahdi et al., 2022).

#### 2.4 Organizing, analyzing, and managing health information effectively.

Biosensors have been utilized extensively to monitor a range of activity and health indicators within the last ten years. This business is being driven by the proliferation of smartphones and the shrinking of other mobile devices that use various gadgets and technology, including watches, rings, and cell phones. Wearable biosensors are being developed to measure a range of bodily fluids, including tears, sweat, and saliva. Although they are still in the early stages of research, oral biofilm and tooth biosensors hold great potential for transforming our capacity to track biofluids that can alert us to significant physiological activity that can be used to improve health. Oral biosensors could monitor biofilm, microbiology, pH, glucose, or a variety of other important indicators to offer information regarding dental caries or other oral or systemic issues (Kim et al., 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the significance of telehealth, digital data transfer, and communication technology became more apparent. The miniaturization of high-resolution intraoral digital cameras, which are widely accessible and may be reasonably priced, as well as the remarkable camera features on the majority of smartphones, have made telemedicine a modern and advantageous method of expanding access to dental health care (Jnr, 2020).

In today's global dentistry environment, communication between a dentist and patient might occur remotely via telecommunication technology or in more conventional face-to-face contacts. One cutting-edge technique that has enormous potential to revolutionize the provision of dental care is telecommunication. To raise the standard of dental treatment, we must embrace and make the most of new

telecommunication's technology. A key component of providing oral healthcare is having an effective dentist-patient relationship. It ensures that patients get the proper dental care, understand their diagnosis and available treatments, and experience support all along the way. However, if there is inadequate communication, patients might not obtain the proper dental care (Ho et al., 2024).

Through the development of new programs, or apps as we now call them, smartphones are being utilized for a wide range of health-related tasks, from accessing your EHR data to using bio monitors. It should come as no surprise that smartphone applications are made for both consumers and healthcare professionals. Numerous healthcare professionals use their cellphones for a number of purposes, such as data collection and communication, browsing clinical resources that offer details on diagnosis and treatment, prescription drugs and their dosages, and clinical management techniques, to mention a few. High-speed computers, voice recognition, artificial intelligence, and internet interaction are all advancing these technologies and increasing their value in the delivery of healthcare (Jnr, 2020).

### 3. Conclusion

The fast-developing discipline of dental informatics has the potential to revolutionize dental practice and enhance patient outcomes. As digital imaging, telehealth, artificial intelligence, data analytics, electronic health records, and practice-based research networks have advanced, dental informatics has made it possible to integrate and analyze dental data, resulting in precision dentistry, evidence-based dentistry, and better patient care. To successfully apply dental informatics, however, issues including interoperability, standardization, privacy, and security of dental data must be resolved. There is potential for future dental informatics research and innovation to advance the field and revolutionize dental practice.

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