



Variation in Information Needs and Quality: Implications for Public Health Surveillance and Biomedical Informatics

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Variation in Information Needs and Quality: Implications for Public Health Surveillance and Biomedical Informatics

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Abstract:

Understanding variation among users' information needs and the quality of information in an electronic system is important for informaticians to ensure data are fit-for-use in answering important questions in clinical and public health. To measure variation in satisfaction with currently reported data, as well as perceived importance and need with respect to completeness and timeliness, we surveyed epidemiologists and other public health professionals across multiple jurisdictions. We observed consensus for some data elements, such as county of residence, which respondents perceived as important and felt should always be reported. However information needs differed for many data elements, especially when comparing notifiable diseases such as chlamydia to seasonal (influenza) and chronic (diabetes) diseases. Given the trend towards greater volume and variety of data as inputs to surveillance systems, variation of information needs impacts system design and practice. Systems must be flexible and highly configurable to accommodate variation, and informaticians must measure and improve systems and business processes to accommodate for variation of both users and information.

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