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Title:

The impact of a web-based diagnosis checklist system on specialist referrals from primary care: Results of a survey of General Practitioners

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Abstract:

Background: Diagnostic errors in primary care are common and can lead to inappropriate or delayed referral. Web-based diagnostic checklist systems have been developed to support clinicians in generating differential diagnoses and may influence referral decision-making.

Methods: A survey of General Practitioners (GPs) was conducted to evaluate the impact of a web-based diagnostic checklist system on clinical decision-making, particularly with respect to specialist referrals. GPs were asked to report on their use of the system in routine practice and its effect on their diagnostic thinking and referral behavior.

Results: Respondents reported that use of the system led to changes in their differential diagnosis in a substantial proportion of cases. In approximately 29% of cases, the system influenced the decision to refer, including changes in the urgency or specialty of referral. In around 40% of cases, additional diagnostic tests were prompted. The system was perceived as particularly useful in complex or uncertain cases.

Conclusions: A web-based diagnostic checklist system can influence diagnostic reasoning and referral decision-making in primary care. Such tools may help reduce diagnostic error and support more appropriate use of specialist services.

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