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Healthcare professionals' experiences of the automatic decision support – A study method for developing the EBMeDS forward

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Background: The Evidence-Based Medicine electronic Decision Support, EBMeDS, is an automatic and context-sensitive decision support service (www.ebmeds.org), integrated in the Mediatrati patient record. We have recruited one Finnish health centre to a trial where all patients of the health centre are randomized into an intervention or a control group. When the patient of the intervention group visits in the health centre the professionals are shown patient specific tailored guidance at the point of care.

Purpose: We aim to find out what factors help or hinder the implementation and use of the EBMeDS service. At first we focus on internal and external factors in an organization which might be associated with the use of EBMeDS. Next, we explore experiences of the professionals to analyze how these affect patient care and clinical practices. Finally we are assessing the professionals' intention to comply with the EBMeDS guidance.

Methods: Baseline survey was carried out in March 2009. It consisted of both a questionnaire for healthcare professionals and interviews of chief physicians and nurses and information technology's advisers. A continuous feedback is gathered electronically during the trial and used to define themes for group interviews at the end of the study. Furthermore, the questionnaire for professionals will be carried out after the trial.

Results: From the interviews, at baseline the organizational readiness for the EBMeDS service was good. The interviewees saw only positive consequences of the implementation. The professionals' attitudes towards decision support guidance were positive. Only the busy practices and problems with information technologies were considered as potential barriers for the use.

Discussion: The professionals' experiences and feedback are essential in the continuing development of the EBMeDS service.