


Assessing the Alignment Between Existing Finnish Patient Portals and the Newly Implemented Finnish Well-Being Reform: Informed by Insights From the US Health Reform Monitoring

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ABSTRACT

Due to the recent implementation of the Finnish well-being reform, there is limited research discussing the reform's aims and its alignment with existing Finnish patient portals. The objective of this research is to assess the alignment between existing Finnish patient portals and the newly implemented well-being reform. This research is supported by the insights gained from monitoring the US health reform survey that was conducted in 2021. By Aligning patient portals with the well-being reform, there is an opportunity to achieve patient-centered care and facilitate improved communication between patients and healthcare providers.

KEYWORDS

Alignment, Balance, Cost, Empowerment, Healthcare, Patient Portals, Well-Being Reform

1. INTRODUCTION

The well-being of 21 counties reform (Sote-uudistus, 2023) in Finland has brought significant changes to the healthcare services, aiming to enhance the quality of care, improve patient outcomes, and increase overall well-being (Keskimäki et al., 2019; Koivisto et al., 2019). This reform focuses on transforming healthcare delivery by integrating various services, promoting preventive care, and empowering patients to actively participate in their healthcare decisions (Koivisto et al., 2018).

Patient portals (Nøst et al., 2021; National Library of Medicine, 2023) have emerged as an integral component of the well-being counties reform. The importance of patient portals within the well-being counties reform cannot be overstated (Keskimäki et al., 2019). They have the potential power to improve patient outcomes, enhance communication between patients and healthcare providers, and facilitate access to healthcare services. Patient portals are digital tools that enable individuals to conveniently access their health information, review test results, and monitor their health progress (Carini et al., 2021; Sipanounet al., 2022; Lear et al., 2022; Khadjesari et al., 2023; Nelson et al.,

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2023). Additionally, these digital tools can promote self-care, facilitate care coordination among different healthcare providers, and contribute to the overall efficiency of the healthcare system (Sieck et al., 2018; Brands et al., 2022, Cresswell et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023; Zachrison et al., 2023). The Finnish well-being reform was accepted by Finnish parliament in June 2021 (Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2021). The objective of this research is to assess the alignment between the existing Finnish patient portals and the recently implemented Finnish well-being reform, which became effective on January 1, 2023. There is limited research discussing the reform's aims and the growth of the use of Finnish patient portals. To support this assessment, insights from the US Health reform monitoring were utilized.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

There is limited research that assessed the alignment between the newly implemented well-being counties reform and the existing Finnish patient portals. To support the claim of limited research, a systematic search was conducted using PubMed databases and Finnish Journal of eHealth and eWelfare. The review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The purpose of the systematic search was to identify relevant studies that assessed the Finnish patient portals and their alignment with the well-being county reform. The key search words used were: "Finnish patient portals and Finnish well-being counties." Furthermore, Finnish search terms such as "Suomalaiset potilasportaalit ja Sosiaali ja terveydenhuollon Hyvinvointialueet" were employed. The covered research period was between January 2018 and September 2023. While differences exist in the healthcare systems of the United States and Finland, patients in both countries benefit from the presence of patient portals within their respective healthcare landscapes. Furthermore, patient portals in both countries share the mutual objective of enhancing patient access to healthcare services, which also encompasses the integration and accessibility of telehealth services through these portals. Currently, there is no survey in place to gauge the degree of alignment between the newly implemented Finnish well-being reform and the existing Finnish patient portals. To facilitate this evaluation, a survey derived from the monitoring of the United States' healthcare reform monitoring (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2023) is used to acquire valuable insights and recommend proactive action to Finnish health policy makers. The health reform monitoring survey conducted in the USA in April 2021 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2023) encompassed a total of 9067 participants. A sample size of 9067 participants was employed for a study of the US population, which exceeds 335 million (United State Census bureau, 2023), in contrast to the Finnish population, which is fewer than 6 million (Statistics Finland, 2023). The knowledge extracted from the sample size of 9,067 participants was deemed sufficient to explore and extract insights across a range of facets, including:

- Participants' health status.
- Places visited by participants based on their gender.
- Places visited by participants based on their health status.
- Places visited by participants based on their work status.
- Telehealth tools used by patients.
- General preventive care or routine care addressed during phone or video visits.
- Health care for a new injury, illness, or health problem other than COVID-19 issues addressed during phone or video visits.
- The lack of technology to access phone or video visits with a healthcare provider.

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