

Week 6: Mining Physician Data

Listen to the NPR story at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11382945>

Answer the following questions on the discussion board:

- 1) Do you agree that mining physician data should be illegal? Why or why not?**
- 2) As a patient how do you feel about pharmaceutical companies mining your doctor's data?**
- 3) As an employee of one of the pharmaceutical companies how do you feel about mining physician data?**

As always, you are encourage to respond to other's postings.

Pharmacies sell data to companies that compile the data into information

Bad data, pharmacist who prescribed oxycotin once

Does it boost health care costs?

Pressuring doctors to prescribe drugs they normally wouldn't?

I'm very ambivalent about the mining of physician data. It's easy to be against it because we are talking about pharmaceutical companies using the information for marketing purposes. On the other hand, if this information was being mined to provide the American Medical Association oversight of physicians who might be abusing their power (ie. Prescribing oxycotin in large quantities to their patients), then I don't think I would object to that.

As a patient, I don't care, so long as my name stays off the prescription information. The only concern for myself is how the pharmaceutical industries use of this information could impact my health care. If this data were abused by a salesperson to blackmail or pressure my doctor into prescribing drugs they wouldn't otherwise purchase, then I am no longer receiving impartial, objective diagnosis.

As an employee, my concern would be the use of the information. The article mentions a physician who is told by a salesperson that their clinic is prescribing oxycotin; however, only one patient was being prescribed the drug. The salesperson was misrepresenting the information to make it sound like there was a demand for the drug at the clinic. That's unethical. If pharmaceuticals are going to be using this data, then clinics and physicians should have protections similar to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, where they can see their own data and challenge it. Transparency is the key to ensuring the ethical use of this information.