Information and its uses in medical practice:  
A critical interrogation of IT plans and visions in health care

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This article is concerned with technology driven IT plans and visions in health care, and their interferences with medical practices and uses of information. Drawing on fieldwork from a study of the implementation of an electronic patient record in a hospital in Norway, it analyses different instances of information generation, use and sharing in order to consider the role of IT and electronic information flow in medical practice. When compared with practice, the model of information in IT plans turns out to be very narrow and rigid as to what should count as information; what the proper form of information is; and what paths it should take. The argument is that the implementation of IT built on this model of information first excludes large parts of the information practices and processes in medical work; secondly adds to the dependence upon other forms of information, and information flow and sharing; and third, creates extra work.

Keywords: Health care services, public IT programmes, electronic patient records, medical practice, information flow, fluid and collective information

Introduction: IT programmes in health care services

In Norway as in many other countries the future and modernisation of the public sector is at the top of the public and political agenda. There are strategy plans and programs to promote innovation and renewal in the public sector – as well as programs for research into these processes, their conditions