

Digital Healing: People, Information, Healthcare

Marc Ringel, M.D. New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. Pages: 261. Price: \$31.96.

Digital Healing takes the reader on an evolutionary journey focusing on the deployment of electronic health record systems across the United States from 2000 to 2018. The author, Marc Ringel, M.D., studied at the Abraham Lincoln School of Medicine in Chicago, Illinois followed by postgraduate training in pediatrics at Cook County Hospital (Chicago). He later became a general practitioner in Yuma, Colorado (population 2,000) as part of the National Health Service Corps where he fell in love with rural medicine and became Board Certified as a family physician. He has also practiced in rural Wisconsin and taught at the North Colorado Family Medicine Residency Training Program in Greeley, Colorado. He is an eloquent writer and speaker, and is dedicated to writing about rural health care, telemedicine, and continuing medical education. Dr. Ringel weaves relevant scholarly references and personal stories about his role as a family medicine physician to engage the reader in a thoughtful discussion about ways in which people are better than computers and *vice versa* in health care.

A recurrent theme throughout the book is that no matter how sophisticated or impressive technology is, the determining factor for its successful implementation is the people involved in deploying and using the technology. Personal stories and clever examples of telemedicine applications are interwoven throughout the book in a way that draws the reader in. Dr. Ringel cleverly depicts the improvement offered by electronic health records while describing the importance of the human component of health care, focusing on patients' stories and relationships, while using clever chapter titles such as "Left-Handed Pregnant Women," "Everybody Wants Your Data," and "Financial and Human Costs of EHRs." The author commands an encyclopedic knowledge of medical history and integrates it well with the rapidly evolving digital revolution that is affecting health systems throughout the world.

The central thesis of the book explores the ways in which human beings can utilize digital information and resources to improve health, while also allowing people to be more human. The author intercalates stories describing entire health systems, such as those in rural and urban centers in Colorado, with individual anecdotes that highlight the strengths and limitations of electronic health records. The author's views, particularly advocating for rural health initiatives and reducing health services disparities, are prevalent throughout the text.

As a rural practitioner, Dr. Ringel recognizes the importance of interventions that address disparities in healthcare access, particularly in remote areas of the country. All forms of telemedicine are emphasized, from phone calls to virtual consults with intensivists who offer around-the-clock expertise to clinicians in remote hospitals with limited or no access to specialists.

The book is carefully organized into chapters focusing on specific areas ranging from virtual reality to artificial intelligence to clinical decision support. The author avoids jargon and aims for a balanced presentation that is accessible to medical and general readers alike. This book offers a set of perspectives on the evolution of the electronic health record system, but is not a comprehensive overview of the field. The book is available in hardback and eBook formats through a variety of services. Readers of all levels of experience will enjoy this welcome reality check in today's digitally connected world.

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