Ethical assessment of new ICT-systems in health care – ethical aspects.

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Abstract.
Since many years information and communication technology is used in health care. However, lately one can notice an accelerated interest for different kinds of ICT-applications, partly explained by the need of a faltering IT-industry to find new markets. ICT can in different ways enhance the practice of health care. However, it is necessary to examine the application of new technology in the light of the ethical values of health care. The new technologies must be instrumental in achieving the goals and values of health care and they must fit into health care practices.

In my presentation I will discuss the ethical implications of two computerised ICT-systems in health care. One is a system for patient surveys. The system makes patient information accessible to any authorised care provider irrespective of at what place in the organisation he or she works. The other system is a system for patient Internet accesses to his or her own medical record.

While both systems have very recently been introduced in health care practice it is too early to draw any empirically based conclusion about their value. However, it is particularly at this stage of technical development, i.e. before the technique is set, important to reflect on possible effects from an ethical point of view. This reflection should take into account both possible foreseen and possible unforeseen and unintended effects of the new systems. The first part of the presentation is devoted to this reflection.

The decision to introduce systems of this kind implies difficult and sometimes controversial ethical balancing. How should the systems be introduced and how can they achieve a broad acceptance and even perhaps a moral justification? In the second part of my presentation I will discuss these questions in relation to theories of participatory design, technology assessment and reflective equilibrium.