Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Science

of

SCOTT PRIOR

BSc (Med) (University of Manitoba, 1987)
BSc (University of Winnipeg, 1982)
BA (University of Winnipeg, 1978)

“What is an Appropriate Electronic Referral for Psychiatry?”

School of Health Information Science

Monday, April 25, 2016
1:00PM
Human and Social Development Building
Room A202

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Francis Lau, School of Health Information Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Karim Keshavjee, School of Health Information Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Alex Singer, Family Medicine, University of Manitoba

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Yin-Man Lam, Department of Anthropology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Referrals to medical specialists for consultation or further care are an integral part of the workflow in healthcare. Even so, the referral process is problematic in many respects. The use of information technology (IT) holds promise to address many of the problematic aspects of referrals to medical specialists by submitting requests for consultation as electronic referrals (e-referrals). Even so, little is known about the design requirements for e-referrals in terms of meeting the goal of submitting appropriate requests for consultation that in turn could potentially address the problematic aspects of the referral process.

This study was conducted in order to address some of the gaps in knowledge about design requirements for e-referrals. This study focused on e-referrals at a conceptual level by determining both the criteria for ensuring appropriateness and the associated information requirements for a particularly problematic aspect of referrals, namely requests for psychiatric consultation.

This study was conducted in several phases. First, relevant literature was reviewed. After reviewing the literature, gaps in the current knowledge about e-referrals were identified and a rationale for this research was developed. Next, a qualitative field study consisting of interviews with relevant stakeholders was conducted. The results of the field study were distilled into operationalized criteria for determining the appropriateness of referrals for psychiatry as well as an information model that would support those criteria. An environmental scan for current e-referral standards was also conducted. Finally, the results of the field study were used to perform a gap analysis on the results of the environmental scan.

Some conclusions were made at the end of the study. First, the criteria for determining an appropriate e-referral for psychiatry and the information model needed to support the criteria seemed to be a robust finding based on analyzing for both internal and external validity. Second, current standards for e-referrals seemed to be inadequate in terms of meeting the needs for e-referrals for psychiatry as determined by this study. Third, it was possible to conclude that the design requirements for e-referrals for psychiatry were highly dependent on the various contexts in which such e-referrals would be developed.

Finally, this project was used as a case study in order to address some of the gaps in knowledge identified during the course of the literature review. At the end the limitations and contributions of this study as well as potential next steps for research into e-referrals were discussed.