

Privacy issues in a psychiatric context: applying the ISD privacy framework to a psychiatric behavioural monitoring system

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Abstract Privacy issues are frequently discussed amongst researchers, practitioners and patients in health-care. However, psychiatric patients' privacy issues get less attention in information system development (ISD), whereby they are one of the most important stakeholders. This paper applies Carew and Stapleton's ISD privacy framework to psychiatric monitoring systems to understand the issues that are related to monitoring psychiatric patients' behaviour. By understanding the privacy issues amongst patients, the research will be able to provide guidance to system developers to produce a privacy-sensitive system that can contribute to the system engineering for international stability. We will elaborate each factor in the framework (physical, social, psychological and informational) and then explain the relationship to the privacy of psychiatric patient.

Keywords Ethics · Privacy · Socio-technical systems development

1 Introduction

Little work has focused on privacy issues in psychiatric monitoring systems; thus, an appropriate framework is needed before privacy-sensitive applications can be designed and developed. Psychiatric patients' privacy is being denied a fundamental human right even though it is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 'Every person with a mental illness shall have the right to exercise all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as recognized and in other relevant instruments' (United Nations 1991). A patient centred approach to systems development could help enlighten this community whereby patients would be able to control and manage their own privacy needs in order to protect and manage their privacy.

This is because patients with mental illness deal with sensitive issues in coping with the illness based on their beliefs, background and illness level. The important reason to protect their privacy is to protect prejudices that might occur towards psychiatric patients which can lead to other life-related issues in future.

To identify privacy issues for psychiatric patients, we apply a comprehensive privacy framework (Carew and Stapleton 2005a) in information system development (ISD) by relating each factor to a psychiatric patient monitoring system. This paper discussed how to use this framework in a psychiatric monitoring system. The paper consists of a discussion of privacy definitions, privacy protection laws in Malaysia, psychiatric monitoring, and finally the relationship between the framework and a psychiatric behaviour monitoring system.

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