

What Are the Challenges of Using Data Directly From the EHRs?

Rachel Richesson, PhD:

Moving towards a more pragmatic approach that many of our studies are doing, almost by definition pragmatic clinical trials are using data directly from the EHR. This is conveniently available and useful, and so, an obvious target for study designers to look at in terms of data for endpoints and outcomes. But there can be some challenges associated with using electronic health record data systems. There can be differences in systems even with the same vendor as they are implemented in individual organizations. Different data coding and representation conventions are common across health systems and they change over time. So these differences in systems and data can actually affect the condition definitions or the query definitions that a researcher might use to identify participants for pragmatic clinical trials, and in many cases, to use those data to identify and measure endpoints and outcomes. So these differences can be quite a challenge and are important to acknowledge.