Comparison of Record Linkage Software for De-duplicating Patient Identities in California’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

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Outline

1. Background
2. Methods
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Limitations
6. Conclusions
Background

• Accurate linkage of PDMP records is essential
  – To identify potentially risky prescribing and dispensing patterns and outlier patient behavior
  – To monitor potentially risky population trends
Patient entity resolution is performed in CURES to provide the following features:

- Patient safety alerts to prescribers (new alerts produced daily)
- De-identified data for researchers

CURES receives approximately 155K new prescription records daily.

With this new data, the analytics engine must reconcile patient, prescriber, and dispenser entities across the 1TB database every night.
- Once the data is de-duplicated nightly, the analytics engine identifies the resolved persons’ current prescriptions based on date filled and number of days supply.

- The resolved persons’ current prescription medicinal therapy levels are calculated and compared against pre-established thresholds.

- Therapy levels exceeding those thresholds trigger Patient Safety Alerts to current prescribers.
- The de-duplicated data also contributes to the quarterly and annual systematic production of 58 California county and one statewide de-identified data sets for use by public health officers and researchers.

- This data enables counties to
  - calculate current rates of prescriptions,
  - examine variations within the state, and
  - track the impact of safe prescribing initiatives.
- CURES is a “home grown” PDMP system. This means that the CA PDMP has full access and visibility to how the CURES system operates and functions. After employing a custom-built entity resolution methodology, the CA PDMP wanted to have its de-duplication approach evaluated.

- One of the purposes of the evaluation is to help inform the CA PDMP on areas for strength and weakness. The CA PDMP plans to pursue implementing improvements in this challenging area.
Goal

• Compare record linkage programs with respect to
  – Accuracy in de-duplicating a subset of patient identities
  – Identification of excessive opioid use and outlier behavior

• Challenges
  – No unique patient identifier
  – Variation in identity fields for an individual
  – Hundreds of millions of records
Methods

Compare Record Linkage Programs

• CURES 2.0 custom-built program
  – SAS application
• The Link King: http://www.the-link-king.com/index.html
  – SAS application
• Link Plus: http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/npcr/tools/registryplus/lp.htm
  – Microsoft Windows stand-alone application
• LinkSolv: http://www.strategicmatching.com/products.html
  – Microsoft Access application
Approach

• Start with exact matching of prescription record identifiers
  – Decreases size to ~60 million records

• Link within smaller geographic areas
  – Test dataset: patient identities for prescriptions filled in 2 zip3s
    • 1 in Northern California, 1 in Southern California
    • ~500,000 records
Entity resolution

1) Compare pairs of records to determine whether they match
2) Assign a score to indicate match quality
3) Determine which records correspond to the same entity based on match results
Fields Available to Match

- First name
- Last name
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Address
  - Street address
  - City
  - Zip code (5 digits)
Manual Review

• Matches identified by one or more of the programs at any level of certainty were included in the full dataset of paired records.

• Paired records were stratified by level of certainty.
  – From high to low confidence in a match.

• 5 reviewers inspected a stratified random sample of 720 paired records.
  – Blinded to software certainty ratings.
  – “Truth” determined by majority opinion.
Statistical Analysis

• Assessed accuracy of software using stratified sample weighted to full set of paired records
  – **Sensitivity**: proportion of true matches identified by the program (aka recall)
  – **Positive predictive value**: proportion of identified matches that are true matches (aka precision)
• Assessed relative importance of specific identity fields in distinguishing matches from non-matches by each program
• Computed PDMP patient alerts and CDC metrics for the patient entities identified by each program
Results

Agreement between Record Linkage Software and Manual Review of a Sample of Pairs of Identity Records from California’s PDMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software</th>
<th>PPV (%)</th>
<th>Sensitivity (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>94.9 (94.1-95.7)</td>
<td>73.0 (72.0-74.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>97.9 (96.7-99.2)</td>
<td>94.8 (93.8-95.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>93.5 (92.3-94.7)</td>
<td>83.6 (81.5-85.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>93.1 (91.7-94.5)</td>
<td>95.3 (94.8-95.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: CI=confidence interval; PPV=positive predictive value
Match by manual review: at least 3 of 5 reviewers rated pair as probably or definitely the same person
Importance of Date of Birth

Percent of Paired Identities with the Same DOB by Match Status

- Manual Review
- Custom-built
- The Link King
- Link Plus
- LinkSolv

Match and Non-Match
Importance of Last Name

Percent of Paired Identities with the Same Last Name by Match Status

- Manual Review
- Custom-built
- The Link King
- Link Plus
- LinkSolv

Match | Non-Match
Importance of Zip Code

Percent of Paired Identities with the Same Zip Code by Match Status

- Manual Review
- Custom-built
- The Link King
- Link Plus
- LinkSolv

Colors: Match (green) and Non-Match (red)
# Number of Patient Alerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PDMP Alert Scenario</th>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Patient Entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently prescribed &gt;90 MMEs/day</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>3426</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>3434</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>3444</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>3435</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obtained prescriptions from ≥6 prescribers or ≥6 pharmacies in last 6 months</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>2211</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>2524</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>2329</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently prescribed opioids &gt;90 consecutive days</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>3039</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>3138</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>3097</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>3140</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently prescribed both benzodiazepines and opioids</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>2923</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>2955</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>2989</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>2976</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC Metric</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>Value per Quarter or 6-Month Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Period 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average dose of &gt; 90 MMEs in quarter*</td>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>8.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>8.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>8.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>8.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained prescriptions from ≥5 prescribers and ≥5 pharmacies in 6 months†</td>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>18.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>20.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>25.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>22.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlap of opioid prescriptions in quarter‡</td>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>16.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>17.14</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>17.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>17.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlap of benzodiazepine and opioid prescriptions in quarter‡</td>
<td>Custom-built</td>
<td>9.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Link King</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Plus</td>
<td>10.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkSolv</td>
<td>9.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*% of patients  
†per 100,000 population  
‡% of patient prescription days
Discussion

- All 4 record linkage programs were reasonably accurate in identifying matches and non-matches
  - Most accurate: the Link King and LinkSolv
  - Least accurate: custom-built program
Importance of Matching Fields

• Date of birth was very important to human reviewers, but less so to the custom-built program and Link Plus.

• Agreement in last name was more important to the custom-built program than to human reviewers and the other 3 programs.
  – Double last names and switched first & last names were less likely to be included in matches by the custom-built program.

• Agreement in zip code was more important to the custom-built program and Link Plus than to the others.
Patient Alerts and Metrics

• Effects of using specific software were greatest on the identification of outlier patients who obtained prescriptions from a large number of prescribers and/or pharmacies
  – Prescriptions from multiple prescribers and/or pharmacies are likely to result in multiple identity records, which must be linked
Limitations

• Small scope of evaluation
  – Half a million records from geographically separated areas
  – Used default settings where available

• Changes to current linkage methods in production would require further testing for feasibility and accuracy
Conclusions

• Certain publicly and commercially available record linkage programs linked identity records more accurately than a custom-built application
  – It is not necessary to build a record linkage system from the ground up
  – It is necessary to conduct a test of any proposed software with manual review of matches to ascertain their accuracy
Thank you!

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