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Tasks and Privacy Requirements

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The Disconnect Between Healthcare Provider Tasks and Privacy Requirements

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Key Words: Healthcare Information Technology, Healthcare, Privacy, Electronic Medical Records

Abstract

Objectives: Healthcare organizations have been digitizing their Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) for several years now and one of the primary concerns of their widespread implementation is the assurance of privacy for the sensitive information (Greenberg, 2010; Hoffman, 2009). The objective of this study is to shed light into healthcare providers' attitudes towards privacy with regards to EMRs. We argue that healthcare providers place a priority on privacy issues given regulatory, fiscal, and reputation repercussions.

Methods: Using Information Boundary Theory (Stanton, 2002) as a theoretical framework, we established four research questions. These questions formed the basis for the hypotheses that healthcare providers would agree with withholding information (to prevent loss and increase gains) as well as disagree with sharing information. We constructed a survey from this framework and administered it to 327 subjects (with a 45% response rate). Survey validation was conducted as well as hypothesis testing.

Results: The analysis of the data yielded a result that indicated that the survey responses did not support the hypotheses. Healthcare providers strongly disagreed that they would withhold information to solidify gains or mitigate losses. The subjects also agreed that they would share information in order to solidify gains or mitigate losses.

Conclusions: This led to the surprising conclusion that healthcare providers do not place privacy as a high priority within the context of their duties. Healthcare professionals prioritize personal and organizational gain as well as mitigating personal and organizational loss over privacy of EMRs.

Keywords: Healthcare Information Technology; Healthcare; Privacy; Electronic Medical Records

Introduction

In February 2011, at the Health Information and Management Systems Society annual meeting, Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of Health and Human Services, told care providers "In the last two years, the share of primary care providers using a basic electronic health record has gone from under 20 percent to nearly 30 percent." She also pointed out that "When President Obama came into office, only two in 10 doctors used even a basic electronic health record system. Over the last two years, we've created unprecedented momentum behind health information

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