Technology Trends Proposal Part 2: Electronic Health Records

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Electronic health records (EHRs) is a system that allows for the digital storage of patients' health records. This system was introduced to ease the accessibility of patients' records by health practitioners. Since the inception of electronic health records, it has been embraced by many health practitioners; however, this high absorption rate has brought with it a couple of challenges. The greatest challenge is the risk they pose to the security of an individual's data. Since electronic health records involve patients divulging sensitive personal information to health care practitioners, the security of such data should be paramount. Such information, due to its digital nature, is susceptible to breaches that have dire consequences. Hence, the reasons why it is imperative for the health care sector to implement a strategic evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the EHRs, along with their privacy risks and security safeguards.

**Privacy Risk**

This information can land in third party hands in various ways such as intrusion digitally by outsiders or manual access by employees not authorized to access such information (Kruse, Smith, Vanderlinden & Nealand, 2017). Employees of persons who hold such databases are the ones who are more likely to access patients’ confidential electronic health records. This may be intentional or accidental when the person authorized to handle such data is careless and left open, allowing an unauthorized person to view a patient's electronic health records (Kruse, Smith, Vanderlinden & Nealand, 2017). Safeguards should, therefore, be introduced in order to ensure that patient privacy is protected.

**Security Safeguards**

Electronic health records, when used, pose a great risk to the confidentiality of a patients' medical data. The need to ensure the security of such sensitive drove the United States to enact two Acts that introduced the appropriate safeguards. The first Act requires that there be administrative, technical and physical safeguards (Kruse, Smith, Vanderlinden & Nealand, 2017). Administrative safeguards are policies that ensure electronic data are protected and some include implementation and maintenance of security measures. Technical safeguards are meant to prevent digital intrusion while physical safeguards are meant to prevent unauthorized intrusion of equipment and buildings. The second Act mandates the reporting of breaches of databases holding patients’ electronic health records.

**Strategies for Evaluating the Effectiveness of the EHRs**

Evaluating if electronic health records have achieved their purpose is essential as it allows you to understand its weaknesses and how to overcome them. In order to evaluate if electronic health records have been effective various strategies have to be employed. According to Cherry and Carpenter, this will be done using various questions through research, surveys, and analysis (2015). One of these will be patients' responses towards having their records digitized. There is a need to conduct surveys to ascertain the number of individuals who have their records digitized. If the results indicate that most people have accepted to have their health records digitized, this will then be an indication that the introduction of electronic health records has achieved its purpose, thereby showing its effectiveness. Another strategy that can be applied is conducting studies to ascertain the level of security that the databases have. It will involve looking at how many times the database containing patients’ electronic health records has been breached (Cherry and Carpenter, 2015). If the intrusions have been minimum, then the electronic health records of patients have been secure, and their confidentiality maintained. An electronic health record that is secure is effective and will attract the confidence of patients.

References

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