

Do Electronic Medical Records Respect Your Privacy?

In the technology age, many people and businesses utilize products that make it easier to communicate, store information, and have access to everything at their fingertips. One significant technological move in the health industry is digitalizing patient medical records. This provides a number of benefits to the clinic or hospital using the system. They can have quicker access to each patient's records, store x-rays and other test results, and reduce paper waste overall. But where does that leave the patient? With network systems, hackers and other glitches in the system can happen. This can open up a number of patients to having their medical records available to those that are authorized to view them. How will a digitalized medical record system protect patient information?

Areas that use these systems can provide safety and security to their patients electronic medical records — as long as the medical facility does not want to participate in an interoperability system. With traditional paper files, a dozen or so people may handle the records in one visit to the doctor. Medical records available through a system that is interoperable with one or more other facilities could be potentially accessed by millions of people, most of those not authorized to be looking at medical records. This problem is slowing down any significant move for a nationalized medical record network.

There are some medical facilities that have successfully implemented an electronic system for medical records that prove to be secure and effective. As long as the budget is available, the facility can hire one or more IT professionals to be on call when there are problems in the system. These IT professionals can also work to provide the system with the latest in security products. But none of these products would be able to guarantee unauthorized access within a national network of patient records.

The United States and many countries around the world are developing standards for privacy and security of electronic medical records. In the United States, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) has developed a Continuity of Care Record (CCR). This standard was developed to ensure medical records are put into a flexible document so that other medical facilities can utilize the document, but the document is still protected by digital security features. The CCR documents are also just a snapshot of vital information that another doctor may need instead of the whole medical record.

Even though technology may make some nervous, it does also have significant benefits for the patient. Giving multiple doctors access to their records provides better patient care, reducing the amount of mistakes or a missed diagnosis due to a lack of communication. Digital records also reduce the amount of mistakes made due to illegible handwriting. Because systems can vary, patients should always ask what steps are being taken to protect their sensitive medical and personal information from those that are not authorized to view it to ensure privacy.

About the Author

Advanced Data Systems Corporation (ADS) is a leading provider of [Medical billing software](#), Practice Management, Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and [Radiology Information System](#) (RIS) software solutions, currently serving over 30,000 physicians and healthcare providers in every medical specialty and practice size.

Source: <http://www.healthsnare.com>