Create a Learning Environment for Information Governance

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By Mary Reeves, RHIA

To get information governance (IG) off the ground, there must be a leader who is willing to step up and make the case for IG by clearly identifying its benefits—the IG Value Proposition. As a first step in building the value proposition, leaders can create an IG learning environment within the organization by sharing IG information and resources. Recently, I discussed the IG value proposition with an HIM leader and shared a few examples of enterprise-wide benefits. She wasn't sure her organization was ready to implement a formal IG program but had a great idea to start the IG discussion by requesting five minutes on the Department Head Meeting agenda for the next several months to tell the IG story. Here are a few ideas for "IG in 5 minutes."

Key Reason Why Information Governance is Needed

The traditional approach to information has been business unit- or silo-driven with different objectives and values about information. In other words, business units establish information policies and practices that satisfy their needs without consideration of how others may use information. Information governance is an integrated approach to coordinating and facilitating the development of policies and practices among business units.

The following are instructive examples of issues that point to the need for IG, which could be used in the discussion to educate others:

- **Reduced Risk of Breach**: According to *Health Data Management*, in late June a hacker known as "the Dark Overlord" reported the theft of nearly 10 million patient medical records and put them on the Dark Web market where hackers buy and sell data taken from a variety of sources. The stolen patient records had a value of more than $800,000. Stolen PHI has a shelf life that is much longer than credit card data and therefore has a higher black market value. Defend against breaches and cybercriminal attacks by developing enterprise-wide information governance security policies and plans. Include mobile device management to enforce security controls for tablets and smart phones. Educate workforce about e-mails; staff are the first line of defense.
- **E-Discovery Costs:** Healthcare organizations involved in civil and government investigations are at risk because prosecutions are often built on electronic documents. Many early EHR adopters are now replacing and consolidating older legacy systems. Electronic records, paper records, records from acquired or obsolete practices, and several different legacy systems present challenges with evidence gathering for e-discovery. Enterprise-wide information governance policies that guide retention, defensible deletion, electronic searches, subpoena responses, and production are crucial. Proactively managing information with adherence to retention and disposition schedules reduces the volume of information subject to e-discovery and costs associated with the request process.
- **Safe Use of Health IT/Reduce Medication Error Rate:** According to EHR*Intelligence*, deaths caused by medical error number more than 250,000 annually making medical error a leading cause of death only behind heart disease and cancer. Three steps have been identified to reduce medical errors: medical errors must be more visible and routinely reported, remedies must be available to safeguard patients, and best practices must be shared. Information governance policies can define medical errors and establish transparent medical error reporting to eliminate the fear of reporting. Policies and monitoring practices can enforce the routine entry of dose and medication into computerized order entry systems with evidence-based safety alerts to safeguard patients.
- **Population Health and Coordination of Care across the Continuum:** According to *Tableau Software*, *Five Best Practices to Enable Population Health Management*, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies and recommends analyzing population health with 42 specific metrics in order to depict an accurate blueprint of the population based on risks and associated costs. Information governance policies and processes ensure timely and

accurate data from multiple sources for population health metrics. With access to metrics and dashboards, healthcare providers can quickly identify and track high-risk patients and ensure they receive appropriate care.

With these discussion points, you can start creating an IG learning environment in your organization today.

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