

Renewing Our Commitment to Privacy: ARRA Provisions Require a Rededication to Privacy and Security

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By Rita Bowen, MA, RHIA, CHPS, SSGB

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act created multiple programs to fund the adoption and “meaningful use” of health IT. It also included provisions to protect the privacy and security of the patient information stored in those IT systems.

These provisions and the subsequent final rules will increase awareness of privacy and security. Increasing healthcare organizations’ responsibilities and liabilities definitely has the ability to drive change. Careless steps that result in a breach of protected health information will not be tolerated as we move forward.

This is an important time for HIM professionals to rededicate themselves to ensuring the privacy and security of protected health information.

Taking the Lead

William Howard Taft noted, “Too many people do not care what happens as long as it does not happen to them.” How true this statement is, especially when it comes to matters of privacy, security, and confidentiality.

The public and federal demand to improve the security of health information systems will increase as more violations are reported through provisions like the ARRA breach notification rule. Heightened publicity will also increase public mistrust in health IT.

In order to garner the public’s trust, we must continue to ensure the privacy and security of protected health information. We also must lead efforts to resolve incomplete and fragmented healthcare privacy and security rules.

Our collective leadership in privacy, security, and confidentiality should result in industry recognition of the Certified in Healthcare Privacy and Security credential. I encourage more members to seek this credential and speak out on the ethical principles necessary for health information privacy and security practices.

We must stay connected to common goals and move as one to enhance quality, increase efficiency, and serve as a patient advocate regarding healthcare privacy, security, and confidentiality. Trust in professional ethics and established health privacy and confidentiality rules encourages individuals to share information that may be important to their health.

The HIPAA privacy rule was based on a “chain of trust” model. We are the professionals who must identify the weakest links and lead reform.

As we move forward, the quest should be to leap toward greatness. We can improve the health and well being of all Americans by enabling health information that assists patient treatment in a personalized, pre-emptive, predictive, and patient-centered way.

Rita Bowen (rita.bowen@erlangers.org) is enterprise director of HIM services at Erlanger Health System in Chattanooga, TN.

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