

# Telehealth Privacy and Security: An Opportunity for HIM Professionals

Save to myBoK

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While I have not yet had the opportunity to do so, I am looking forward to participating in my first telehealth visit. While telehealth is an exciting new avenue for healthcare delivery, the success with which providers have deployed telehealth services varies, and the services may not be as prominent in the healthcare setting as proponents envisioned. Some consumers have concerns regarding telehealth, such as feeling that a face-to-face session provides better quality of care for certain conditions, uncertainty about insurance coverage, difficulty using the technology, and privacy and security of the session.

I coauthored a systematic review of research on telehealth topics (including privacy and security) that was published in 2017 in the *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*. According to our review, there is still much uncertainty regarding the topic of telehealth, even when it comes to such basic questions as “what parts of the telehealth session will be kept, for how long, how they will be maintained and where they will be stored.” These are all critical questions healthcare organizations must address. And HIM professionals should play a major role in all aspects of the privacy and security of telehealth services as well as help determine how the video, audio, and images are stored, maintained, and accessed.

In addition, the research indicated that “privacy and security is a concern across all types of specialties such as telerehabilitation, telenursing, teletrauma, and telepsychiatry.”

Just one of the privacy and security concerns that need to be properly addressed is that of informed consent for a telehealth session. Although the content of the informed consent may vary from state to state, it is important to discuss with the consumer the importance of the privacy and security of the telehealth session. Use, disclosure, and access to patient information warrants proper authorization, as the authors of the research paper note, and this should be discussed with the patient so that they understand ownership of the data before the telehealth session begins.

Our research indicated there is a need for overall provider and patient awareness, education and training, and policies on keeping telehealth information private and secure, as well as policies that specify who can be included in the telehealth session.

HIM professionals, who are both experienced in bridging the communication gap between consumers and providers and fluent in the demands of proper information preservation, will be instrumental in educating consumers and healthcare providers on the privacy and security aspects of telehealth systems. HIM professionals will also be the key conductor ensuring all parts of the telehealth privacy and security system work.

## Reference

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