

The Impact of Health Information Technology Management in a Healthcare Facility

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Over recent years, health information technology (HIT) applications have increased with varying evidence on its influence on patient safety. According to Alotaibi and Federico (2017), HIT entails the utilization of new technologies such as information processing for storage, retrieval, use of healthcare information, knowledge, and sharing of data to improve communication and the decision-making process. HIT presents healthcare organizations with multiple opportunities to improve and transform medical care. Some of these opportunities include; improved medical outcomes, minimized human errors, improved care coordination, improved efficiencies, and sharing of patient data from various healthcare facilities.

The Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

The idea of electronic health records (EHRs) is not new in most healthcare organizations across the globe. However, the technology has seen slow growth due to the slow adoption of the systems in hospitals (Palabindala, Pamarthy & Jonnalagadda, 2016). Despite those hospitals that have implemented EHRs systems reporting improved satisfaction levels and reliability of the system, some healthcare organizations are indisposed to implement the EHRs systems. Some of the main reasons for the organization's unwillingness to adopt the system include; lawsuits and legal complications, fears of increased risk of medical error, and costs of implementation.

Many barriers must be addressed before EHRs systems are implemented including lawsuits and legal complications. According to Gesulga et al. (2017), if the implementation of these systems is done incorrectly, chances of risk of error can increase. If that happens, healthcare professionals as well as the hospitals can be exposed to potential misconduct

complaints among other legal hitches. As a result, some hospitals are unwilling to implement EHRs systems to avoid such complications.

Secondly, some of the other healthcare organizations have indisposed implementing these EHRs systems due to an increased risk of error. According to Harman and Cornelius (2017), as healthcare providers become accustomed to the EHRs Systems, they rely on these technologies to make vital decisions which at times may lead to medical errors. It may seem difficult but some actions while using these computerized machines may lead to the accumulation of errors leading to a trail of mistakes which eventually leads to a medical error. Hence, much training is needed before these tools are implemented to avoid the chances of making medical errors.

Lastly, hospitals have been indisposing these EHRs tools because of the high costs of implementation. Most healthcare organizations still argue who is responsible for the implementation costs of the system since it profoundly benefits the patients (Palabindala, Pamarthy & Jonnalagadda, 2016). That is, most of the accrued capital benefits from the EHRs systems go to the healthcare payers instead of those financing the implementation. Besides, after implementation of the system, other costs are incurred for regular maintenance and system upgrades. All these factors have made it challenging for some healthcare organizations to adopt EHRs systems.

A strategy that can reassure the implementation of a new health information system in most hospitals is if the implementation process is covered by the ministry of health. This means the ministry covers all the implementation costs. More importantly, after implementation, the ministry can introduce training programs to confirm all healthcare providers know how to use the new systems. In doing so, incidences of making errors can be reduced, minimizing lawsuits and other legal complications.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

The primary drive of HIPAA is to ensure confidentiality and integrity when it comes to sharing an individual's medical information. It also plays a big part in safeguarding patient's health information by granting special access to the information to healthcare providers and insurance companies for continued medical care (Harman & Cornelius, 2017). On the other hand, HIPAA addresses insurance issues for persons between jobs. Initially, without HIPAA, workers would lose healthcare coverage when they were between jobs.

With that said, HIPAA has a significant influence on a patient's medical records. First, HIPAA has assisted in streamlining healthcare functions. In doing so, efficiency in healthcare organizations has significantly improved and at the same time, ensured patient's records are shared securely. HIPAA has introduced ethical standards in hospitals ensuring that patient information is only accessed by authorized personnel. According to Edemekong, Annamaraju, and Haydel (2020), all HIPAA covered healthcare facilities use similar code sets and well-known identifiers to transfer health information between healthcare organizations and insurance companies.

Besides safeguarding patient's health information, HIPAA is essential to patients who need copies of their health records. As a result, with the copies, the patients can look for errors and provide the hospital with an opportunity to rectify them. Consequently, with those copies, patients do not need to repeat new tests when visit new healthcare organizations since information can be transferred from one facility to another. Before HIPAA, healthcare organizations were not obligated to release copies of a patient's health records (Harman & Cornelius, 2017).

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) ACT

The HITECH Act was introduced to increase the implementation of HIT. According to Menemeyer et al. (2016), the HITECH Act focused on EHRs aiming to increase their adoption by healthcare professionals. Additionally, the Act was enacted to remove some of the loopholes in HIPAA. Hence, the HITECH Act ensured healthcare professionals complied with HIPAA rules, and any in case any of the rules were comprised, notifications would be sent to the affected individuals. The Act introduced major penalties for healthcare professionals as well as healthcare organizations that failed to comply with HIPAA requirements.

Due to the slow adoption of EHRs systems among hospitals, the HITECH Act was introduced to advance healthcare, improve care coordination, and efficiency. In that way, the Act made it easier for healthcare professionals to share information between different covered healthcare facilities. Hence, the Act advanced the adoption of EHRs systems (Menemeyer et al., 2016). Consequently, the HITECH Act increased incentives among healthcare professionals and healthcare organizations making it easier for them to make the change to new technologies. On the side of healthcare professionals, the HITECH Act ensured all these professionals familiarized themselves with the EHRs system. In doing so, these professionals would adhere to HIPAA rules to improve privacy and safeguard the healthcare information of their patients.

A strategy that healthcare practitioners could use to advance the quality of healthcare services is the lean production technique. The lean production strategy is based on identifying customer preferences as well as their needs (Salem et al., 2017). By identifying the needs and preferences of patients, medical staff members can improve the care processes. This is because lean production techniques aim at eliminating activities that do not add value to processes to increase efficiency and at the same time, minimize operational costs. More importantly, the lean

production technique focuses on minimizing errors to improve quality, which means medical staff members can increase the effectiveness of patient care while minimizing costs. Therefore, by applying lean techniques, healthcare professionals can maximize on value-adding activities to enable the delivery of quality services.

The Digital Health Technologies

There are several risks connected with digital health technologies among patients, caregivers, consumers, and healthcare providers. To begin with, not all health information is protected equally. Healthcare professionals and patients among other individuals who use HIT may not be aware of how the data is collected, stored, or shared with third parties. This raises the issue of data privacy and health literacy among patients. According to Harman and Cornelius (2017), data privacy policies linked with HIT are not the same. As a result, they may not be clear to the involved parties or may represent inaccurate information on the data. Even if there exist laws such as HIPAA and HITECH Act, it might be challenging to protect patient's health information from hackers. This is because the laws only focus on safeguarding the information from access by unauthorized individuals. In the current digital era, incidences of data leakage and hacking have increased among other risks of using new technologies. Hence, there is no total security of patient medical information under HIT.

A strategy that I would propose to diminish the risk in question is root cause analysis. According to Salem et al. (2017), root cause analysis is an approach used to provide solutions to problems and it focuses on detecting and comprehending the main causes of a problem and the contributing factors. Therefore, since the main risk of using digital HIT is data privacy violations, healthcare organizations need to implement an action plan through root cause analysis. The action plan should consist of ways to improve the design of HIT to reduce

incidences of data leakages and hacks. In doing so, patients will no longer be worried about losing their health information to hackers or other unauthorized people. More importantly, the plan will increase the consumer's confidence in HIT facilitating its adoption.

The Laws and Penalties

Some of the laws and penalties concerning fraud and abuse in healthcare settings include the following.

1. The Federal Anti-Kickback Statute
2. The Stark Law
3. The False Claims Act
4. Exclusion Statute

The False Claims Act

This act plays a big part in combating fraud in healthcare settings and has an impact on a patient's decision. Generally, the False Claims Act (FCA), imposes penalties and liabilities on persons who submit fraudulent claims or participate in various types of misconduct associated with government property or money knowingly (Harman & Cornelius, 2017). In the healthcare settings, fraudulent claims entail billing for services not offered, billing for irrelevant patient care services, double billing for the same offered service, or billing consumers at higher rates than expected. According to FCA, for each claim filed, the penalty should be around \$5,500-\$11,000 plus all the additional damages incurred.

False claims in the healthcare sector deprive all citizens, especially patients of their right to access affordable medical care. For instance, when government money is used on fraud, there is little to spend on providing quality patient care. As a result, some patients are required to incur

all the costs by themselves making the process to obtain quality healthcare costly. The FCA was enacted to prevent such frauds by not only protecting the taxpayer's dollars but also to enhance patient safety. The FCA can be used to stop healthcare facilities from admitting patients into amenities that can expose them to more risks (Harman & Cornelius, 2017). Also, the FCA prevents healthcare professionals from conducting unnecessary surgeries or procedures to patients for profitability. Consequently, the FCA impacts a patient's decisions by limiting the over-documenting of patient's health records to increase the bills. By creating inaccurate medical records that can affect the decisions to be made during the next visit is prohibited under the FCA. Lastly, the FCA ensures patients are not provided with inferior drugs or treated using sub-standard medical equipment. Therefore, it is evident that the FCA influences a patient's decisions by helping them access medical care that promotes their safety.

The Ethical Principles of the HIM Professionals

HIM professionals apply the following four ethical principles to develop competing values. These four ethical principles include; beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice (Harman & Cornelius, 2017). The beneficence ethical principle entails HIM professionals acting morally to benefit other individuals. This means under this principle, the HIM professionals are obligated to safeguard the rights of those they serve, prevent them from harm, and ensure there exist not conditions that will bring them harm. The second ethical principle, nonmaleficence, focuses on the fact that HIM professionals must not exact harm to others. As per this principle, HIM professionals should not kill, cause pain or suffering, incapacitate, or cause offense unto others.

The third moral principle, autonomy, obliges HIM professionals to respect the choices made by adults with the mental capacity to make decisions (Reeve et al., 2016). Therefore,

through the autonomy principle, HIM professionals are required to tell the truth, safeguard confidential information, obtain permission for patient's interventions from their caregivers, and respect their privacy. Lastly, under the justice principle, HIM professionals are obliged to distribute any benefits, resources, risks as well as costs equally. This principle promotes fairness in healthcare organizations. Therefore, by applying these four ethical principles, HIM professionals can promote confidentiality, quality, cooperation, and advancement of healthcare. More importantly, these principles will help them to comply with laws, remain honest in their activities, and avoid participating in any unethical activities. Since problems often arise in healthcare settings and decisions need to be made quickly, HIM professionals cannot rely on the law or other policies for guidance but the four ethical principles.

Conclusion

To this end, HIT can improve patient outcomes as well as their safety if implemented appropriately. This is because HIT can reduce the chances of medical errors and at the same, enhancing healthcare professional's compliance with hospital guidelines. However, HIT has been faced with slow adoption among some healthcare facilities due to fears of lawsuits and other legal complications and increased costs of implementation among other factors. Despite the challenges, there is no doubt that HIT can revolutionize the healthcare sector by improving the quality of services rendered and promoting safety.

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