

Chapter XIII

HIPAA: Privacy and Security in Health Care Networks

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Abstract

This chapter explores privacy and security issues in health care. It describes the difference between privacy and security in the context of health care, identifies sources of concern for individuals who use information technologies for health-related purposes, and presents technology-based solutions for privacy and security in health care networks. The purpose of the chapter is to provide an investigation of the sources of concern for regulations and technologies in the health care industry. The discussion is based on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and its eight guiding principles. The chapter explores the implications of legal and regulatory environments driving HIPAA regulations, the need for privacy and security in health care networks, and

information technologies used in the health care industry. Related ethical issues, current technologies for providing secure solutions that comply with the regulations, and products emerging in the market are also examined.

Introduction

Data communication infrastructures are changing how health information and health care is provided and received. People using tools such as the Internet for health-related purposes — patients, health care professionals, administrators, and researchers, those creating or selling health products and services, and other stakeholders — must join together to create a safe environment and enhance the value of the Internet for meeting health care needs. Because health information, products, and services have the potential to both improve health and do harm, organizations and individuals that provide health information via the Internet have obligations to be trustworthy, provide high quality content, protect users' privacy, and adhere to standards of best practices for services in health care. People using telecommunications infrastructures in health care share a responsibility to help assure the value and integrity of the information by exercising judgment in using health care sites, products, and services. Internet Health Coalition (2000)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has brought about significant changes in the procedures and practices within the health care industry. As newer information technologies are implemented in health care organizations, the challenge becomes to increase network connectivity and enable access to key information without compromising its confidentiality, integrity, or availability. With the advent of HIPAA regulations, health care organizations are required by law to have procedures in place to protect the privacy of patient information. This chapter addresses issues related to privacy and security of patient information in health care networks. It provides a background on HIPAA regulations, drivers for the need for privacy and security in health care organizations, the role of technology-based solutions,

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