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Analyzing Patient Access to Personal Health Information

Survey Highlights Trends in Consumer Access to Health Information via Patient Portals

LOS ANGELES – Oct. 11, 2017 – Four out of five consumers take advantage of their healthcare provider’s patient portal, according to a 2016 [survey](#) on consumer access to health information presented at the [American Health Information Management Association \(AHIMA\) 89th Annual Convention & Exhibit](#) in Los Angeles.

Today’s presentation, “Patient Access to Personal Health Information: An Analysis of the Consumer’s Perspective,” highlights results that demonstrate the opportunity for healthcare providers and health information management (HIM) professionals to better engage consumers in accessing and using their personal health information (PHI).

“Providing individuals with access to their health information is necessary in delivering high-quality care,” said Kim Murphy-Abdouch, MPH, RHIA, FACHE, clinical associate professor of health information management at Texas State University. “With the age of technology, healthcare providers and health information management professionals must adapt to accommodate the increase in demand for PHIs, both electronic and paper.”

The availability of electronic health records has increased significantly since 2009, when the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act was signed into law, allowing consumers to access their healthcare information in a meaningful and secure manner.

The survey results revealed a significant reduction in charging consumers for access to their medical records; a significant increase in portal availability; and a moderate rate of usage of Personal Health Records (PHR). Those results in comparison with a similar 2013 survey of HIM leaders showed the following key data:

- Eighty-two percent of consumers accessed their electronic health record through their provider's patient portal in 2016 compared to generally less than five percent in 2013.
- In 2016, only 10 percent of consumers were charged for copies of their personal health information when they were requested compared to 65 percent in 2013.
- Less than half of consumers surveyed reported that they maintained a PHR in either paper or electronic form.

Survey results also uncovered consumers who had healthcare experience were no more likely to use a patient portal or maintain their PHR than consumers without healthcare experience. In fact, opportunities exist to educate not only consumers, but also other healthcare professionals about how to access their information.

“Although we have seen a dramatic improvement in patient engagement with their PHI, there is always room for improvement,” said AHIMA interim CEO Pamela Lane, MS, RHIA. “Health information management professionals have an obligation to continue to assist patients and others in accessing and maintaining their own personal health record.”

AHIMA is dedicated to helping healthcare providers streamline patient health information request processes to ensure they are compliant with the Office for Civil Rights' (OCR) guidance on an individual's right of access under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Announced in July 2017, the [Patient Request for Health Information form](#) is intended to be used as a template—to be modified with organizational specific contact information—and given to patients or their designated personal representative when requesting access to health records.

Murphy-Abdouch's presentation is one of several addressing consumer engagement in HIM. For details on additional presentations on this topic and others, visit the [consumer engagement tracks page](#) of the AHIMA Convention & Exhibit website.

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About AHIMA

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 103,000 health information professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. AHIMA is advancing informatics, data analytics, and information governance to achieve the goal of providing expertise to ensure trusted information for healthcare. www.ahima.org