

Equitrac Office in Healthcare

With tougher legislation, rising costs of providing quality care, and an environment where patient information and privacy must be protected, this paper investigates how Equitrac Office looks to address these issues and help Providers meet these challenges head on.

M E E T I N G T H E C H A L L E N G E S O F T O D A Y

Executive Summary

Providing quality healthcare in an environment of legislative reform, tightening budgets, increasing costs, all the while ensuring confidentiality of patient health information is a challenge for the modern healthcare Provider. As part of the ARRA, new legislation such as the HITECH Act and changes to HIPPA put increasing demands on Providers.

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- Add powerful document output security to their HIPAA compliance framework
- Strengthen the safeguard practices that ensure the privacy and integrity of patient protected health information (PHI)
- Provide healthcare personnel with secure and convenient access to output capabilities wherever needed
- Optimize and manage the use of output devices
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- Allocate print costs to specific departments, research grants or even recover allowable print charges

Healthcare Reform is Underway

Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, better known as the “Stimulus Package”, physicians and hospitals can receive generous reimbursements against their costs of becoming “meaningful users” of health information technology such as electronic prescribing systems or certified electronic health records (EHR).

Eligible physicians, including those in solo or small practices, can receive roughly \$40,000 to \$64,000 from Medicare or Medicaid; hospitals stand to receive \$2 million to \$8 million. These incentive payments begin in 2011 and gradually phase down until 2015. By then, providers are expected to have adopted and be actively utilizing an EHR in compliance with the “meaningful use” definition or be subject to financial penalties. Early adopters are especially rewarded in that 70 percent of the incentive comes within the first two years.

While the government is still working on the definition of “meaningful use,” the concept is expected to include point-of-care access to EHR, electronic prescribing and interoperability to promote electronic sharing of health information.¹

The transition to EHR is already happening, but industry-wide adoption remains low. According to a 2008 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 38.4 percent of physicians reported using an electronic records system other than billing. While this was up from 25 percent in 2005, it shows that the majority of the profession needs to begin taking steps now to get into EHR compliance.

At the same time that providers must begin to use technologies to share patients’ medical information, they are also facing increased criminal and civil penalties for failing to protect it.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 has for years required healthcare providers to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of patient’s protected health information (PHI). But now the

previously mentioned HITECH legislation has increased penalties for illegal disclosure to new maximums of \$50,000 per violation and \$1.5 million per year. Plus, HITECH introduced new public disclosure requirements for providers following the discovery of a breach. This includes notifying the media if the breach involves more than 500 residents of any state or jurisdiction. If the financial penalties are not disincentive enough to meet the safeguards requirements, the public relations nightmares of having to announce a breach certainly are.

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The HIPAA safeguards requirement establishes protections for PHI in all forms—paper, electronic and oral—by actions and practices such as securing locations and equipment, implementing technical solutions to mitigate risks, and workforce training. But the law and the supporting Nationwide Privacy and Security Framework for Electronic Exchange of Individually Identifiable Health

Information only set out principles for achieving these goals without specifying how “covered entities” must accomplish them.

In addition to the costs of non-compliance with security and EHR requirements, providers could also have to give money back to the government should a federal Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) discover that they have received Medicare and Medicaid overpayments. The previous three-state RAC demonstration program is being expanded to all 50 states no later than 2010.

Keeping Information Both Secure and Accessible

The one constant in this changing regulatory, technological and economic environment is PHI, patients’ protected health information. From admissions, through diagnosis and treatment, to release and billing, and to the eventual sharing of the forthcoming EHR, information generated and needed at each stage of the healthcare process can promote better quality of care. Interoperability, the new watchword in healthcare, offers benefits and challenges to everyone on the provider side of the business.

The physicians, clinicians, nurses, and laboratory technicians charged with directly providing care want

the ability to access medical information wherever and whenever they need it. IT directors, continually called on to deliver more for less, want to provide as much mobility and access as possible, within the constraints of tightening budgets. Hospital administrators, for whom the cost of HIPAA compliance threatens already squeezed margins, want to satisfy physicians' needs for accurate, timely and reliable information while limiting access to only the specific information an authorized user needs to do their job.

Even if healthcare providers achieve near-total adoption of electronic health records by 2015, paper is still going to be around for healthcare workflows such as printing out patient information and instructions, non standard forms use, and supporting non-affiliated or paper based practices.

If paper is not going away, then administrators and IT departments will eventually have to solve a paper-related problem with security, quality and cost implications: unmanaged and hidden printers.

Many, if not most, hospitals and large provider organizations have installed fleets of networked multifunction devices: advanced digital output equipment that can print, copy, fax, and scan directly to electronic files. But fearing

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exposure of PHI in documents left unattended at the output trays of such shared devices, many users believe that only their personal desktop printers can assure the privacy of patient records.

So with or without authorization, some departments provide users with the personal printers they want. The full cost of these untracked and unmanaged devices remains hidden, but it is unquestionably higher than if output were directed to networked high-efficiency MFPs. Plus, these non-networked printers don't support the digital interoperability and workflow processes that organizations are seeking today, driving up costs even further.

Unmanaged printers can even cost healthcare providers lost revenue. That's because HIPAA and state regulations allow providers to charge reasonable cost-based fees for providing copies of medical records to insurance companies, lawyers and patients. Without accurate and reliable systems to track output, these recoverable costs are lost—and with them, dollars that could be spent on delivering service. Finally, personal printers contribute to wasted paper, energy and resources, a genuine concern for any healthcare organization trying to reduce its environmental footprint and promote sustainable practices. Unaccountable personal printers encourage exactly that type of output. Of course, networked printers can also contribute to waste in documents that are printed out but never claimed.

How Can Equitrac Help?

Healthcare providers can address and overcome several of the regulatory, technological and economic challenges confronting them today by taking control of their print networks with Equitrac Office. This single, cost-effective output management solution makes it easy for providers to:

- Add powerful document output security to their HIPAA compliance framework
- Strengthen the safeguard practices that ensure the privacy and integrity of patient PHI
- Provide healthcare personnel with secure and convenient access to output capabilities wherever needed
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Document Security, Automated

HIPAA privacy guidelines don't tell providers how to be compliant, just that they have to be. Incorporating document security into a privacy and security framework should be accepted as a start toward achieving compliance. And there can be no argument that securely printing documents that contain protected health information requires at a minimum controlling access to printers and tracking their use. In other words: knowing who printed what, as well as where and when they printed it.

Equitrac Office provides powerful yet easy-to-use tools to manage device access and track output. Print tracking begins at the desktop, with the automatic capture of every document printed by all healthcare personnel. This information continually builds a complete audit log of all printing activity.

More extensive security is provided at the output device through the combination of Follow-You Printing® and Secure Document Release. For example, with Follow-You Printing, documents printed from a shared nurses' station are not immediately printed out. Instead, they are held in a secure print queue managed by the Equitrac server. Print jobs are not released until the nurse is physically at the device to authenticate themselves by swiping their I.D. card or entering a PIN on either an Equitrac terminal or directly at the MFP. This effectively secures every MFP since only a valid user I.D. can unlock the device. Because documents aren't left unattended at the printer, there is virtually no risk of documents being improperly retrieved or confidential PHI being exposed.

Security with Convenience

Hospital staff—including physicians, nurses, and administrators—are more likely to comply with security measures as long as these measures don't interfere with their work. The more convenient, transparent or automatic, the better. Just as Equitrac's enhanced security begins at the desktop, so does its convenience.

Equitrac makes print tracking and user accountability an automatic and routine part of printing. In most installations, Equitrac significantly simplifies printing by reducing multiple printer choices—and user decision-making—to just one or two Follow-You Printing virtual printers. Beyond that, unless an organization's print policies require entry of a billing code for cost allocations to specific research projects or grants, Equitrac's print tracking is completely transparent to the user.

For convenient authentication at the output device, Equitrac's user-friendly card reader works with all leading I.D. card systems. Hospital staff need only swipe their current card for instant authentication to use the MFP, access their secure print queue and release their document. They have no new codes or procedures to learn.

Support for single sign-on at the device further increases user convenience by allowing authenticated

users to access all of their authorized services without having to re-enter their credentials. For example, if a lab technician needs to scan a document after releasing a print job, they can do that without having to log out of the device and log in again to scan at the MFP.

Answering the Need for Mobility

Hospitals are very busy places. Follow-You Printing gives hospital personnel the mobility they require by allowing them to output documents at any device anywhere on an organization's network—including across servers and geographic locations. This increases their productivity by allowing them to avoid printers that are busy or temporarily unavailable.

Follow-You Printing also promotes security by allowing employees visiting a provider's offices or facilities to send documents into the print queue and then print them out at their destination—eliminating the risk of losing the documents on the way. One example is for lab technicians, who support multiple hospitals, having the ability to print their documents at the various locations. Another is for affiliated doctors to be able to print from multiple hospital locations.

Controlling Costs with Smarter Printing and Better Information

Maximizing the return on a fleet of printers requires that hospital personnel make smarter print choices. Equitrac Office helps achieve cost-saving changes in user behavior by controlling print workflows and making smarter printing virtually automatic. For example, least-cost routing can automatically direct large jobs away from desktop printers to more cost-effective departmental MFPs or to a reprographics center operated by a provider's facilities manager. Color output can be disallowed based on various criteria and color jobs can be re-routed to more appropriate devices.

Another way Equitrac Office helps to control print costs is by helping reduce waste and overall print volumes. Significant amounts of paper can be saved with rules that enforce duplex (double-sided) printing. Follow-You Printing helps to reduce waste by doing away with the need for banner pages that identify the owner of a print job as well as eliminating the waste of documents left unclaimed at shared printers.

Equitrac Office captures and reports previously unavailable information on all printing, copying, and scanning activity, providing the facts for making

more informed decisions on device acquisition and deployment. Summary, detailed and total activity reports show at a glance who produces the most output, which devices are most heavily used or where problems typically occur. Using this information, administrators can avoid wasteful over-purchasing or eliminate unneeded desktop printers. Reports on devices operated by a facilities manager can show whether service level agreements are being met.

Bring Accountability to Print Costs

Besides helping to paint a complete and accurate picture of a healthcare's print and copy costs, Equitrac Office makes it easy to allocate or assign output costs to internal billing codes for the appropriate department, research project or grant.

With Equitrac capturing every document produced on any device anywhere in the organization, and revealing the true cost of output, healthcare providers can recover their full allowable costs of providing copies of medical records to insurance companies, lawyers and patients.

Promoting Greater Security, Higher Efficiency and Better Care

Equitrac Office provides a proven and cost-effective print management solution that can help healthcare providers ensure the privacy and integrity of patient protected health information. By controlling access to output devices, tracking every document printed by every user, and reducing the risk of exposing patient PHI, Equitrac Office plays an important role in a healthcare provider's HIPAA Compliance Framework.

Equitrac Office enhances the security of patient records, provides medical professionals with access to information, and reduces the significant costs of producing documents—all of which generates efficiencies and savings that provider organizations can invest improving their quality of care.

Glossary:

ARRA

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka "Stimulus Package")

EHR

Electronic Health Records

HIPAA

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

HITECH Act

Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act

MFD/MFP

Multi-function Device/Multi-function Printer

PHI

Protected Health Information

RAC program

Recovery Audit Contractor program

¹ At the time this paper was being researched, the official definition was still under review. In August of 2010, the government did post an official definition.

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