Flow of Patient Health Information Inside and Outside the Healthcare Industry

The American Health Information Management Association’s (AHIMA) “Flow of Patient Health Information Inside and Outside the Healthcare Industry” chart is divided into two groups: healthcare providers and non-healthcare providers. To read the chart, first determine which group you belong to, then follow the flow of health information to examine the many interrelationships that exist. There is no single starting point for this chart. As in everyday use of health information, the starting point depends on the end use of the information. Traditionally, the originating source of all health information is the treatment record. Increasingly, however, health information can originate from any access point. Healthcare entities are facing the challenge of how to successfully manage and protect this health information as it moves across the continuum of care.

**HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS**

**HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (HIM)**

HIM professionals collect, warehouse, analyze, and disseminate patient information internally and externally.

**Internal provider functions that receive information from HIM:**
- Disease registration (cancer, diabetes, and trauma)
- Outcomes/quality management
- Transcription
- Epidemiology or infection control

**Research and Education**

(Thins information also comes from patient care areas.)
- Health services research
- Clinical trials
- Allied health education

**External Entities:**
- County/state health departments
- State disease registries
- State data commissions
- Contract outcomes management databases

**Pre-admissions**
- Precertification
- Scheduling
- Testing
- Patient education

**Admissions**

**Internal provider functions that receive information from patient care areas:**
- Case management/ utilization review
- Discharge planning
- Risk management
- Concurrent quality management

**Patient**
- Request for access
- Accounting of disclosures
- Amendment requests
- Access restrictions

**Patient Care Areas**
- Dietary
- Laboratory
- Pharmacy
- Social services
- Physical therapy
- Respiratory therapy
- Radiology

**REMEDIES**

(For Healthcare Providers)
- Compliance with legislation that protects patient information
- Create policies and procedures that prevent confidentiality breaches
- Train and retrain employees and medical staff continuously
- Develop stringent and uniform information privacy and security programs

**REMEDIES**

(For Non-Healthcare Providers)
- Comply with legislation that protects patient information
- Keep occupational health records and personal records separate in institutions where both types of records are kept
- Prohibit disclosure of health information
- Require patient authorization or subpoena for disclosure of identifiable information unless authorized by federal or state law or regulations
- Train and retrain employee and medical staff continuously

**Non-Healthcare Providers**

**MARKETERS/ DATABASE DEVELOPERS**

**LIFE INSURERS**

**THIRD PARTY BENEFITS MANAGERS**

**THIRD PARTY PAYERS**

**EMPLOYERS**

A large number of American businesses are self-insured. As a result, employers potentially have access to patient health information.

**Other potential risks to health information confidentiality:**
- Credit card companies can create databases based on cardholder purchases
- E-mail can be intercepted in transit; employers can legally access and read employees’ e-mail messages
- Employee health clinics are likely to keep records of employee visits. This is problematic if these records are co-mingled with other employee records
- Companies and/or third parties can monitor and keep records of the e-mail addresses of visitors to Internet chat rooms and Web sites

**Providers supply these organizations with patient information as part of their accreditation and review activities:**
- Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care
- American Osteopathic Association
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
- National Committee for Quality Assurance
- Quality Improvement Organizations
- State surveyors

**Some organizations outsource these functions. In their activities. Some may not participate in the activities designated on this page.**