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Policy Analysis Paper 3: The Ethical Implications of HIPPA

The Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act (HIPPA) is a federal law that sets standards for protecting patient health information, known as protected health information (PHI). HIPPA introduces many concepts that empower individuals and their health information, but three main concepts included in HIPPA are patient autonomy, confidentiality, and security for PHI.

There are several ethical implications that arise regarding HIPPA, one of which being patient autonomy. Patient autonomy refers to the patients right to make decisions about their own health based on their own values, preferences, or opinions. HIPPA supports and upholds this concept, allowing patients to control their health information, which includes who accesses their information, who can use their information, and who can disclose their information (Shindell). HIPPA also maintains confidentiality when it comes to patient information. Confidentiality refers to keeping something secret or hidden from unwanted eyes. HIPPA requires that healthcare providers maintain confidentiality of their protected PHI. HIPPA states that health care professionals have a duty to take the steps to keep patient information confidential to the patients' preferences (Pope). Lastly, HIPPA sets security requirements for PHI. Healthcare providers are required to implement safeguards that protect patients' PHI that meet the criteria of ensuring confidentiality and integrity of the information, protect against any threats to the integrity of the information, or unauthorized use/disclosure of the information, and ensuring

compliance with the Administrative Simplification provisions of HIPAA (Health and Human Services).

The three concepts of HIPPA discussed above primarily protect a patient's right to privacy. The entire idea of confidentiality is rooted in privacy, keeping unwanted eyes from seeing something you want to be hidden, as mentioned. On top of that, HIPPA has a "Privacy rule" that is the basis for giving individuals the right to access, control, and make corrections to their PHI (Health and Human Services). Additionally, security requirements set by HIPPA were created to maintain said confidentiality. Patient autonomy protects and patient's right to choose, It empowers patients to make their own informed decisions, including the refusal of medical treatment.

Implementing HIPPA measures can be somewhat costly. For instance, healthcare providers need to install databases and hardware that are compliant with HIPPA standards. Tools that continuously monitor healthcare database networks can cost as much as \$20,000, and implementing various security tools, like password managers and antivirus software, can be up to \$15,000 (Wadhwa). Additionally, organizations can earn a HIPPA certification, which costs \$1,040 in total (Wadhwa). The benefits far outweigh the costs, however. Healthcare customers will feel confident that their data is secure and in the right hands, and they'll trust their healthcare provider more. Breaches won't be as common and implementing HIPPA measures complies with the law, so you won't face any sanctions or fines.

HIPPA appropriately addresses the rights of individuals because it does what it is designed to do, and that is to protect patient health information. This can be seen just by looking at what it does for patient autonomy, confidentiality, and security for PHI alone, as mentioned. It already helps that HIPPA is a federal law that healthcare organizations must abide by, and it

helps even more that the privacy and safety of healthcare patients and their data is properly protected.

Citations

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