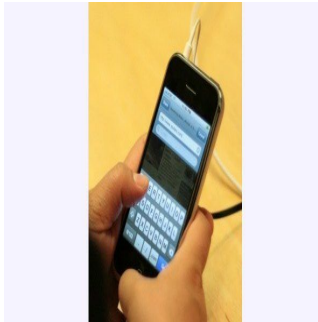

Secure Text Messaging As Workflow Tool



Physicians who send text messages to other clinicians using their own smartphones risk the privacy and security of the information they send. However, insisting that they adopt additional gadgets and tools to communicate with other clinicians can prevent a smooth workflow. A secure app that can be downloaded to doctors' existing devices now provides hospital clinicians with a communication solution that protects sensitive health information.

Ed Ricks, the CIO of Beaufort Memorial Hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina, took notice of physicians' texting habits and realised the potential for a simpler solution that would not needlessly complicate care delivery. Ricks worked with Imprivata, a technology provider based in Lexington, Massachusetts, to develop Cortext, a HIPAA-compliant app which can be used on clinicians' personal or hospital-issued devices.

"They're already doing this," Ricks recently told mHealth News, "and all I wanted to do was make sure any data was secure."

Ricks began to recruit physicians to participate in a trial of the app, quickly going from a handful of participants to more than 60 by the end of the two-month pilot program. "They realised within days that this wasn't about the technology," Ricks said. "It was a workflow issue."

There are now approximately 360 clinicians using the Cortext app, and it will be a requirement rather than an option for hospital staff going forward. Some departments will continue to use voice pagers since they need to have their hands free while working.

In the three years that have elapsed since Ricks' observation and the success of the Cortext app, he has gleaned some insights into how the process can be configured for other hospitals. First, it is important to involve clinicians from the start, not relying only on the early adopters. Fortunately, even those with poor proficiency in technology tools are likely to be able to use the app when it works on their own familiar devices.

Another priority for hospital administrators should be the platform's auditing capabilities. The messages that are sent via the app are part of care coordination, and administrators should know who is sending and receiving messages. Accountability is a key issue, so it is vital that the communication is monitored in terms of when and where messages are delivered. Eventually, it may be possible to treat the messages as part of electronic health records, although that is not yet the case.

"Everybody's here to take care of patients," Ricks said, noting that the adoption of new strategies can be easy when clinicians understand that the solution actually does improve the process for physicians and patients alike.

Ed Ricks will speak at the HIMSS15 Conference and Exhibition in Chicago on 14 April. His talk, part of a Mobile Health Knowledge Center session, is entitled "Improving Clinical Workflows with Fast Access & Communication."

Source: [mHealthNews](#)

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