



Protecting providers.
Promoting safety.

rmfstrategies

Patient Safety Risks Associated with Healthcare IT Systems

Health care providers want to value and rely on the HIT systems designed to help them efficiently collect, organize, and retrieve clinical data. But, we know that some solutions divert or give rise to patient safety risks. Listed below are some of the concerns expressed and risks known to medical malpractice and patient safety experts. As you examine this list, you might ask yourself:

Do I worry about this? Should I? If so, what should I do about it?

Copying/Pasting/Prepopulating

Incorrect patient information in the medical record due to the practice of pre-populating, copying/pasting, or automatically rolling over information (to avoid re-entering data).

Hybrid Records

Misinterpretation of the status of a patient who has unique clinical data stored in both an electronic record and a paper system.

Inadequate Display or Printout

Loss or misinterpretation of a patient's clinical information due to inadequate screen displays or inconsistencies between display and printout.

Inadequate Reporting Capabilities

Failure to recognize systemic patient safety issues due to an inability to extract aggregate data.

Inadequate Training

Inability to record or retrieve critical patient information due to unfamiliarity or lack of training with an HIT system.

Incompatible Systems

Inability to construct a complete and up-to-date profile of a patient whose clinical data resides on multiple systems not designed to interface with each other.

Intermittent E-mail Use

Loss of critical information (or patient compliance) due to a patient's or physician's inconsistent use of e-mail.

No Simultaneous Access

Inability to access data for more than one patient at a time because of a system's, or a setting's, technical limitations.

Outdated Information

An inaccurate picture of a patient's status due to a system that retains outdated clinical information.

Partial Provider Participation

Failure to coordinate a patient's care among clinicians within the same setting/organization who do not universally use a given HIT system.

Patient-entered Data

Non-verified, potentially incorrect, patient-entered, data.

Pre-empted Orders and Results

Failure of orders to be completed because they are overridden/replaced by subsequent orders from the same or other providers. Failure of preliminary findings to be retained in the record, therefore eliminating data responsible for clinical decisions.

Security

Unintended release or corruption of unsecured data.

Subsequent Provider Access to Record

Inability to generate patient records for subsequent care.

System Crashes

Loss of critical patient information—or access to information—when a system crashes or is purposely taken down for service.

Time Drains

Patient care time abbreviated by systems' speed limitations, technical delays, complexity, or malfunctions.

Unclosed Loops

Failure to receive or recognize critical patient information when a system is unable to close the loop on tests, referrals, and transitions in care.

Unstable Wireless Network

Loss of critical patient data due to inadequate wireless infrastructure.

Workarounds

Failure to recognize crucial patient information because an overly sensitive or complex decision support tool/system was overridden or worked around.