How Biometric Identification Enhances Patient Safety and the Hospital's Bottom Line

Hospitals can't provide high-quality care if patient misidentification occurs, as the errors resulting from misidentification can have significant consequences for patient safety and the organizations' financial health.

Patient misidentification is challenging for most hospitals. Patients are misidentified 7 to 10 percent of the time, based on a Rand Corp. analysis cited by The Wall Street Journal.

This widespread problem of misidentification led The Joint Commission to declare the issue a top patient safety goal for 2017. According to a 2016 Ponemon Institute report which surveyed more than 500 healthcare executives, most identification mistakes occur during registration. Further, 64 percent of respondents said patient misidentification errors occur frequently or all the time.

Misidentification can result in time-consuming and costly administrative setbacks as well as increased chances for medical errors. An ECRI report found that 9 percent of 7,600 wrong-patient events resulted in temporary or permanent patient harm or even death. And providers are aware of the correlation between misidentification and medical errors. In fact, about 86 percent of providers reported they have witnessed or were aware of medical errors caused by patient misidentification, according to the Ponemon study.

Due to the intertwined economic and safety consequences of patient misidentification, hospitals are finding it in their best interest to leverage technology to protect their patients and themselves. One such solution involves biometrics, a technology that verifies an individual's identity based on unique biological traits, such as an iris scan.

Economic impact of misidentification

Incorrectly identifying patients not only presents safety issues, but also jeopardizes a hospital's bottom line. The Ponemon Institute report revealed that the average hospital loses $17.4 million per year in denied claims stemming from misidentification.

Duplicate medical records serve as the likely culprit for claim denials. A duplicate record may not present the complete and accurate medical history, as it could lack vital patient information, such as a patient's blood type, allergies or past diagnoses. Physicians who make care decisions based on incomplete information may inadvertently order unnecessary tests, ineffective treatments, or incorrect medication and care, all generating excess costs for both the hospital and the patient. Along the same lines, overlaid medical records - which occur when two individuals' records are merged - don't properly present a patient's medical history.

The American Health Information Management Association Foundation (AHIMA) found that an average EHR system contains 8 to 12 percent duplicate medical records each, costing up to $1,000 to correct , while it takes $5,000 to fix a medical record overlay. These costs accumulate during the "cleansing and unmerging" process, due to the excess administrative time required to sort through the medical databases.

Identity fraud also negatively impacts proper patient identification. If patients present fraudulent identification or insurance cards when registering, they are at risk of adverse events because their records will include erroneous medical information.

Medical identity theft presents a significant concern for providers across the country. Twenty-six percent of U.S. consumers have experienced medical identity theft, with 50 percent paying an average of $2,500 in out-of-pocket costs per event, according to a 2017 Accenture survey. Even more concerning is the Identity Theft Resource Center report that cited 179 data breaches in the healthcare industry in the first half of 2017. According to the 2016 Ponemon Institute survey, 61 percent of respondents think patients who suffer lost or stolen medical records are more likely to experience identity theft.

Identifying a solution

Manual identification processes are no longer sufficient. Few hospitals request Social Security numbers today due to liability concerns, and it is common for patients to have similar names or birth dates. Further, human error can lead to mistyped information.

Imprivata, a healthcare IT security company, introduced Imprivata PatientSecure® as a comprehensive solution. Imprivata PatientSecure is a positive patient identification solution that creates a 1:1 match between patients and their medical records based on patients' biometric identification. The solution is simple enough to be used at any point across the care continuum.

Improving patient safety and streamlining registration workflows with Imprivata PatientSecure

Key facts

Industry: **Healthcare**
Location: **Anderson, Indiana**
Beds: **207**

Challenges

- Ensure, consistent positive patient identification at the point of registration
- Improve patient safety and confidence in the care process
- Reduce the occurrence of duplicate medical records, identity theft, and fraud

Results

- Realized high patient and provider adoption of a positive patient identification solution
- Streamlined patient registration workflows
- Improved patient safety and confidence
- Reduced duplicate medical records and fraud

Community Hospital Anderson, located in Anderson, Indiana, is a 207-bed facility. The hospital is affiliated with a Community Health Network and serves approximately 7,000 inpatients and 200,000 outpatients every year.

The challenge

Community Hospital Anderson's vision is to deliver an exceptional experience to every person involved in the care process, and achieving that goal requires that every patient receives the correct care at all times.

A positive care experience begins with patient identification as the foundation for patient safety and quality of care delivery. The team at Community Hospital Anderson was looking to expand patient identification capabilities to help combat potential patient misidentification.

Community Hospital Anderson, like many other health systems and hospitals, was acutely aware of the costs that patient misidentification can bring to an organization and its patients.

Patient confidence and safety

The costs of patient misidentification can include more than just financial implications. At Community Hospital Anderson, providing a stellar patient experience included ensuring patient safety and patient confidence.

Duplicate medical records and clean-up

Patient misidentification can frequently result in duplicate and/or incomplete medical records. These duplicate records can negatively affect patient safety and can take hours of staff time to cleanse.

Identity theft and fraud

Identity theft and fraud, common types of misidentification, can result in costly denied claims. When patients are correctly identified with accurate information, instances of fraud and identity theft can decrease, improving patient safety and a hospital's bottom line.

The solution

The team at Community Hospital Anderson knew that they wanted to keep their patients safe, while at the same time reducing duplicate medical records, reducing denied claims, and protecting against identity theft and fraud.

To meet those needs, the team at Community Hospital Anderson chose to implement Imprivata PatientSecure® to help improve patient safety and financial outcomes through biometric patient identification.

While the solution itself offered numerous benefits to staff and patients at Community Hospital Anderson, its seamless integration with pre-existing technology also helped sell it as a "must-have."

Imprivata PatientSecure has proven to increase satisfaction at Community Hospital Anderson – for both patients and care providers.

Implementation and adoption

Once Imprivata PatientSecure was selected, the Imprivata professional services team, working with Forward Advantage, put together an implementation plan that included demos and onsite visits to ensure a seamless deployment. The staff at Community Health Anderson understood the value of the solution and were confident that they could speak to its benefits if prompted by patients.

Specifically, registrars understood that being able to positively identify patients would prevent potential downstream errors and would streamline the registration process for both the staff and for the patients.

But staff weren't the only ones who were quick to adopt the solution – patients, and prospective patients, were as well. In fact, people would come in just to register in the system even without an appointment. With both provider and patient adoption of Imprivata PatientSecure so high, Community Health Anderson has been able to capitalize on the benefits offered by the solution.

Seeing the results

With Imprivata PatientSecure, Community Health Anderson has been able to adhere to their mission of delivering an exceptional experience to everyone involved in the care process – patients and care providers alike.

Imprivata PatientSecure has helped Community Health Anderson meet their goals in implementing a positive patient identification solution to:

- Improve patient confidence and safety
- Reduce duplicate medical records
- Combat against identity theft and fraud

The solution has also been able to assist when patients come in unconscious or are otherwise unable to identify themselves. For trauma patients, specifically in the ER, Imprivata PatientSecure can help to ensure that care providers have as much information as possible so that they can deliver informed, appropriate, and expedient care.

The entire team at Community Hospital Anderson describes Imprivata PatientSecure as a "must-have" to help reduce costs and improve care quality. But, ultimately, ensuring patient safety was always the true goal.

Imprivata PatientSecure offers multiple methods for biometric identification including palm-vein and iris scans. Providers can use the palm-vein technology in any workflow, including when the patient is unconscious. The iris technology allows a touchless identification process with single-step photo capture during enrollment.

Addressing some of the potential economic impacts of patient misidentification, the Imprivata solution proactively eliminates the creation of duplicate and overlaid medical records.

By integrating with a healthcare organization's ADT, EHR, kiosk, and EMPI systems, and eliminating duplicate medical records and overlays, Imprivata PatientSecure can help prevent medical errors and adverse events caused by misidentification. Additionally, the technology helps prevent medical identity theft.

"Industry-leading organizations employ technology, such as biometrics, to streamline the admission process and eliminate patient misidentification as well as the need for repeat proofing of a patient's identity," says Aaron Miri, CIO and vice president of government relations at Imprivata. "This focus on process, people, and technology will ultimately lead to a better patient experience and to higher reimbursement."

How Imprivata PatientSecure helped this hospital obviate risks

Community Hospital Anderson (CHA), a 207-bed licensed facility in Indiana, implemented Imprivata PatientSecure to boost financial performance and patient safety. Executives felt the hospital was exposed to various risks because it struggled to correctly identify patients.

"Patient identification is so important," says Beth Tharp, president and CEO of CHA. "It's the foundation of patient safety and quality." Moreover, whenever CHA misidentified a patient, the hospital lost money because of labor costs to rework the error and staff time to re-register the patient and re-do the patient record.

"Any time you impact care, it could be expensive, not just quality-wise, but from a litigation perspective," says John Harris, CFO of CHA. "You set yourself up for risk." CHA has been faced with the costly endeavors of sorting through duplicate medical records and handling stolen patient identities.

"Identity theft is very expensive; it's very labor intensive and a very sore spot in healthcare," adds Mr. Harris. "And those [patients] who get their IDs stolen are understandably upset with us; so we want to mitigate that."

Ms. Tharp emphasizes this critical aspect of patient trust and confidence in a healthcare organization. "If patients receive the wrong bill or they're registered incorrectly, they will question everything that we've done for them," she explains.

CHA's director of revenue cycle, Terri Rinker, agrees that hospitals' registering and billing processes have an outsized effect on patient trust. If patients can't rely on a hospital to complete tasks they view as simple, they won't have confidence in the hospital to perform complex medical procedures.

As a result, proper identification impacts more than a patient's safety and a hospital's bottom line. It can make or break the relationship between a hospital and a patient.

To address its patient identification problems, CHA turned to Imprivata, whose mission is to enable healthcare securely by establishing trust between people, technology, and information.

"We really looked at this as a 'must have,'" says Mr. Harris. "We really feel passionately about [Imprivata PatientSecure], not just for quality reasons but also for confidence reasons, and for the cost of misidentification and duplicate medical records and identity theft. It's well worth the money and well worth the investment."

Conclusion

A hospital's health will suffer if patients' health is at risk due to highly preventable errors like misidentification. CHA believes investing in a patient identification solution like Imprivata PatientSecure positively impacts its bottom line while reflecting a commitment to patient safety and experience. CHA is one of more than 350 hospitals using Imprivata PatientSecure. ∎