

Access to E-Health Data Outweighs Privacy

U.K. Survey: Privacy Concerns Among Chronic Patients



For half of UK patients with chronic medical conditions, the ability to access and control their health data online takes precedence over privacy risks associated with electronic health records. An Accenture Patient Engagement Survey conducted between 21 February and 16 March 2014 polled 519 healthy people and 500 individuals in the UK who had at least one chronic illness. Chronic conditions include arthritis, depression, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, obesity, hypertension, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), osteoporosis and asthma.

According to the survey, a majority (55 percent) of patients with chronic illnesses in the UK believe that they should be able to access all of their healthcare data, although many report not knowing exactly how to do so. When asked about their data security concerns, the chronically ill patients indicated that they were not as concerned about the privacy of their electronic health record (56 percent) as they were about other digitally-stored data such as internet banking (61 percent), online shopping (59 percent) and in-store credit card data (57 percent).

More Proactive Patients

The number of patients with chronic diseases continues to rise in the UK. Despite the eagerness for patients to be able to more readily access their records, the study found that a majority of patients are actively involved in their care. 91 percent of chronic patients are engaged during their diagnosis, 91 percent participate in managing their treatment, and 84 percent report doing something daily to maintain their general health.

The proactive involvement of chronically ill patients in their own care helps them to feel a greater sense of control over their health. The survey found that, in the UK, 73 percent of individuals want to control their medical information but 32 percent believe they have little or no control over their health data. Whether they believe they currently have control depends partially on the type of chronic condition they live with. More asthma patients (40 percent) claimed to have some control compared to patients with hypertension (27 percent).

A Clinical Advantage

Of course, the chronically ill are not the only ones who stand to benefit from improved access to and control over their health records. When patients are able to manage their own health, clinicians have more time to perform other essential duties. Healthcare as a whole can become more effective.

The Accenture Patient Engagement Survey was conducted in 10 countries, with a total of 10,730 individuals polled in the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Spain, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore and Brazil. 5,481 participants were healthy and 5,249 had one of 11 chronic conditions.

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[Source: Accenture](#)

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