Outsource or Upgrade? 5 BIG Big Data Questions

Big data analytics is increasingly becoming more integral to the way health providers interact with patients. This trend is likely to continue, especially with expanding use of mHealth tools such as smartphone apps and wearable devices.

2015 may have been a big year for healthcare big data analytics, but the next 12 months are likely to bring even greater challenges for organisations investing in improved patient care quality strategies, according to an article in *HealthITAnalytics.com*. Providers may wish to ask themselves the following five questions about their readiness to leverage health IT to the fullest in 2016.

Have we recently assessed our health IT infrastructure needs? What investments are we likely to make in the next 12 months?

EHR implementation is only the beginning of a long journey towards health IT maturity. Providers may be able to keep their 2014 Edition Certified EHR Technology for the foreseeable future, but data integration, health information exchange, and interoperability projects are likely to consume much of their IT energy.

Should you invest in new in-house technologies to boost your big data analytics and population health management competencies, or is outsourcing a better option? Organisations need to assess their current technology capabilities (including manpower resources) before comparing their existing toolkit against a comprehensive roadmap of strategic goals.

Do we have a detailed and meaningful data integrity and health information management strategy? If not, do we have the ability to create one?

Providers must always pay close attention to the quality, integrity, and accuracy of their big data. Health information management is an important part of any data analytics strategy, and collecting input from HIM professionals about your organisational direction is critical for success. HIM professionals are experts at guiding healthcare organisations through the complex process of developing and maintaining high standards of data integrity.

"HIM professionals understand how physicians are documenting in the record, and they also understand the technology," says AHIMA President and Chair Melissa M. Martin, RHIA, CCS, CHTS-IM.

Are we planning to enter any value-based reimbursement arrangements in 2016? What process and technology changes will be required to succeed?

With the shift towards value-based reimbursement, the number of providers engaged in some sort of accountable care arrangement is expected to keep rising over the next few years. Providers should fully understand payer's expectations before embarking on an accountable care contract. They may need to retool their reporting procedures to meet the requirements of their payer partners.

Do we have a plan to address patient-generated health data and the Internet of Things? How can we leverage these developments for improved patient engagement?

As patients embrace the Internet of Things (IoT), which includes mHealth apps, wearable devices, home monitoring equipment, and online communication tools, providers must brace themselves for an enormous influx of big data from a variety of disparate sources. Interoperability will be key to harnessing multiple data sources into a meaningful view of patient health, so understanding the role of APIs and other data standards in the big data landscape will be an important competency for your IT experts.

Do we understand how our clinicians, administrative staff, and patients feel about our strategic visions? Can we better integrate organisational feedback into our decision-making?

A simple way to relieve the pressure and renew staff commitment is to ask for their opinions. What can the organisation do better to relieve some of their concerns? What technologies are causing more problems than they solve? Providers who collect feedback from their staff — and make appropriate changes based on the results — may be more likely to see success with the vast array of big data analytics projects coming their way over the next 12 months.

Source: HealthITAnalytics.com
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