

CIOs in the Boardroom



An article in [Modern Healthcare](#) has highlighted the changing role of IT professionals in healthcare management as, with the increasing central role of technology in the hospital landscape, CIOs and CISOs are finally finding a seat in the boardroom and weighing in on big decisions. The publication takes Edward Martinez as an example. Martinez has been running hospital and healthcare IT systems for 20 years and used to be known as the "computer guy" to his colleagues in the C-Suite. Formerly, he reported to a COO or CFO and his opinion on the big picture was rarely sought.

That's all changed. Today Martinez, who has been senior vice president and CIO at Miami Children's Health System for seven years, only reports to CEO Dr Narendra Kini. The CIO is now involved in decisions about practically all facets of the organisation's operation. Martinez says he is now sitting in the boardroom because IT has become central to business. "Today there isn't an element in a hospital environment that isn't controlled by some IT. That puts me at the forefront of at least being asked, 'Ed, what do you think?'" Kini describes the daily connection between himself and Martinez as being "linked at the hip" with regular texting and talking on all business areas.

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The change in Martinez' role is not unusual. Across the board in healthcare and other sectors, CIOs are becoming lynchpins in board meetings and direct advisors to CEOs. This all points to the spread of technology within operations and strategic viability of the healthcare environment. Increasingly complex organisations rely on EHRs, data and analytics to monitor and improve the quality and safety metrics necessary for thriving under reimbursement models.

State-of-the-art IT is also key to the future of improving patient choice in how to interact with clinicians through telehealth and remote monitoring. Furthermore, the piece in Modern Healthcare hones in on the project management skills CIOs have developed and the insights they can bring through data analytics to the C-Suite table.

A 2016 survey by the [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#) highlighted the following:

- 95 percent of respondents said IT is a critical tool for helping systems and hospitals;
- 73 percent of respondents said IT integration was needed in clinical settings;
- 68 percent thought IT was necessary to meet quality metric improvements.

The piece goes on to say that the wider IT remit sometimes comes with a bigger budget and staff but not always. In an HIMSS survey, 71 percent who mostly work for hospitals and systems said they anticipate their IT budgets increasing in the next 12 months.

The CIO decision-making is not confined to management issues. IT professionals are also having more contact with clinicians – particularly with EHR systems integration.

Martinez says that the increased responsibility comes at a cost as working hours rise – but it is worth it.

"It's more of a challenge than I thought it would be," he said. "But most CIOs probably embrace it because we've always been left out of the boardroom. Now that you have the opportunity to be in it, you're not going to turn your back, even if you have to work double time."

Source: [ModernHealthCare](#)

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