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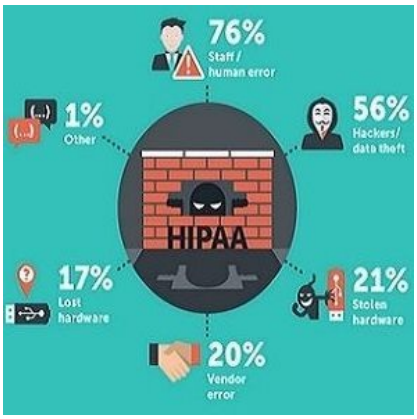
Low Confidence in Interoperability Goals



A study finds that only a small number (17 percent) of healthcare providers are optimistic that the industry will meet the 10-year goal for nationwide interoperability, set last year by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC).

Scrypt, an Austin, Tx.–based document management solutions provider, surveyed more than 700 healthcare providers across the United States to examine their attitudes towards Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance in the wake of several high profile healthcare-related data breaches. Survey results revealed that staff or human error — including lost or stolen data as well as malicious insiders — is the biggest concern in terms of a potential HIPAA breach within healthcare organisations. This concern persists despite the fact that 98 percent of respondents have policies in place to keep staff informed about changes in HIPAA compliance within their own practice.

However, the survey also found that providers are not generally confident in ONC's 10-year interoperability plan. In June 2014, ONC issued a paper, "Connecting Health and Care for the Nation: A 10-Year Vision to Achieve an Interoperable Health IT Infrastructure." The idea is to have an array of interoperable health IT products and services that allow the healthcare system to continuously learn and advance the goal of improved healthcare.

In the paper, ONC has identified five critical building blocks for achieving its goals, while also unveiling its expectations for three, six and 10 years down the road. ONC's three-year agenda is to send, receive, find, and use health information to improve healthcare quality; its six-year agenda is to use information to improve healthcare quality and lower cost; and its 10-year plan is to have a health IT infrastructure that will support better health for all through a more connected healthcare system and active individual health management.

According to the paper, by 2024, information sharing will be improved at all levels of public health, and research will better generate evidence that is delivered to the point of care. In addition, advanced and more functional technical tools will enable innovation and broader uses of health information to further support health research and public health.

"Interoperability in 10 years is unquestionably a worthy goal, but our experience has shown that this is a complex area and providers need secure universal solutions in the interim," Scrypt CEO, Aleks Szymanski said in a statement about the survey's results.

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