

P-639 - PRIVACY, HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

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Introduction: The use of health information technology (HIT) to facilitate record-keeping and communication, and ultimately to improve quality, is increasing worldwide. While providing significant opportunity for improving the care provided to patients with psychiatric illness, this also raises privacy concerns, as it may put sensitive information at greater risk of improper dissemination. This presentation will explore the privacy implications of the increased use of HIT to the field of psychiatry.

Objectives:

- 1) To define the concepts of privacy, confidentiality, and security;
- 2) To outline mechanisms by which electronic information can be compromised;
- 3) To list categories of clinical information that may be deemed "sensitive";
- 4) To present approaches for protecting privacy in an electronic environment;
- 5) To list consequences to psychiatric care from inadequate privacy protection, and conversely to discuss concerns if the flow of psychiatric documentation is excessively restricted;
- 6) To provide recommendations for clinicians.

Aims:

- 1) To provide an overview of the privacy implications of HIT to psychiatry;
- 2) to encourage dialog amongst psychiatrists;
- 3) To prepare psychiatrists to contribute to HIT activities.

Methods: The information for this presentation is derived from the author's experience with HIT developments in the United States on behalf of the American Psychiatric Association; existing literature; and communications with practicing psychiatrists.

Results: Not Applicable.

Conclusions: HIT is revolutionizing how healthcare is delivered and documented, and has significant implications for patient privacy. Psychiatrists need to be conversant in this area to ensure potential benefits to patients with psychiatric illness while minimizing the privacy risks.