



The Small & Medium-sized Practice's Guide to Mobile Messaging

Communication within healthcare environments is often complex and disjointed. A simple message exchange may have to pass through several parties before reaching its intended destination; even a seemingly quick exchange can become a lengthy ordeal, often leading to a bottleneck scenario with the nurse as a gatekeeper.

At any point during this multi-step process - from nurse, to receptionist, to office administrator - the message can become delayed or even distorted. The issue of communication is so severe, that The Joint Commission identified communication problems as a leading cause of serious events in patient care, and also the number one root cause for treatment delays.

The other big issue in healthcare communication is security; a lack of control over the technology and devices staff use to communicate with colleagues and patients leaves practices exposed to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) violations and data breaches, which can carry large fines and result in reputational damage.

Improving communication does not happen overnight, but advancements in technology are making the transition from old systems to new easier and less disruptive. Developments in mobile platforms in particular have paved the way for more seamless and instantaneous communication solutions, that allow for secure two-way dialogue, anytime, and anywhere.

The future of communication: Secure mobile messaging

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is commonplace within the majority of healthcare organizations today, with an estimated 80% of medical professionals using a personal device as part of their workflow². However, despite the benefits of BYOD - device familiarity, convenience, cost savings etc. - a lack of control over staff using their own devices and non-secure applications for clinical communication brings with it significant security and privacy risks.

Standard SMS text messaging, for example, is a form of non-secure communication that can easily land healthcare providers in trouble, should a sensitive message fall into the wrong hands. However, despite the risks, 70% of medical professionals confess to sending protected health information (PHI) via a non-secure application.

In order to protect themselves and their patients' data, healthcare organizations need to address mobile messaging under the HIPAA security rule, as part of their ongoing risk analysis and management strategy. As a best practice, organizations should invest in a mobile messaging platform that is 1) secure and 2) truly HIPAA-compliant.

Using a secure mobile messaging platform can help minimize the risk of HIPAA violations and penalties, as well as improve clinical workflow, and mitigate administrative errors. For a mobile messaging application to be HIPAA-secure, it must meet the following criteria:

1) Administrative safeguards

A termination procedure must exist, allowing PHI to be quickly removed from the device via remote wipe, or access to PHI to be revoked when required. The application should have the ability to shut down access and wipe data should a device wind up lost or stolen.

2) Technical safeguards

PHI must be encrypted to the highest encryption standards available, while on the device, on the server, and during transmission. Secure encryption must be tested on a regular basis.

3) Redundancy

In order for an app to be HIPAA-secure, it must track and backup data at all times, and provide a disaster recovery plan to protect PHI in the event of a device being lost or stolen.

How secure mobile messaging improves healthcare mobility

Once implemented, mobile messaging can provide a number of key benefits:

Minimizes error

Placing password protection on all documents and data ensures no one can access information unless they are granted permission. It is also possible to activate receipts that show when a message has been sent, received, and read. Having the ability to send and receive secure messages in real time reduces delays, which can lead to administrative errors.

Two-way communication

Unlike traditional methods of communication such as paging, mobile messaging is two-way and works in real-time, at both the individual and group levels.

Improves physician communication

Secure mobile messaging can save physicians valuable time when communicating with other members of staff. At the few taps of a button, care teams are able to send messages, images, and attachments, allowing for more of their valuable time to be spent with patients. Further, being able to communicate across multiple locations and offices helps streamline the entire communication process and provide improved experiences for all parties.

Reduces costs and workload

Mobile messaging is relatively low cost and scalable, making it particularly ideal for small, medium, and independent practices. Implementing a mobile messaging system in a healthcare organization, partly in place of email, paging, or telephone calls can help to significantly reduce costs over time.

Easily accessible

Most people own a cell phone and use it on a daily basis. Mobile messages are sent and received right in the palm of the recipient's hand, so the chance of communication being missed is slim. Smaller practices should look for platforms that offer secure self signup that is quick and easy, and can be scaled up or down, depending on the size of the business.

Overcoming the challenges for change

Even within the smallest care teams there are often many parties involved in day-to-day healthcare communication. Making sure that everybody is on the same page is no easy task. To some, making the switch to mobile messaging will come quite naturally, to others it will feel more challenging, and while there is no quick fix for convincing individuals to change their habits of a lifetime, the end benefits will massively outweigh any initial struggles.

Healthcare leaders and decision makers should prepare a detailed strategy for implementing mobile messaging, outlining the reasons for change, the core objectives, and how the process will affect staff and patients. Some larger or more traditional organizations may benefit from appointing an experienced professional to help coordinate all necessary policies, procedures, and staff training to ensure a smooth transition.

DocbookMD. A Medici Company.
Fostering better collaboration.

Empower care teams with HIPAA-compliant secure messaging and real-time alerts to streamline communication, accelerate workflows, and enhance team collaboration.

For more information, please visit www.docbookmd.com or call 888.204.0053