

HIPAA Compatibility for Imaging Systems

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Abstract—Electronic Medical Records can be accessed by any physician or provider, if the requirements of HIPAA are met. The two fundamental requirements of HIPAA, portability and privacy, are addressed by specific features in Acordex products. Portability is met by our adherence to Internet standards. Any browser compatible with Netscape or Internet Explorer can be used to view documents. Privacy is met by using encryption to only provide documents to users with the permission of a hospital or clinic database. The database knows the permission level of each user and can track who is looking at what records. Decisions made by the database control availability of documents.

I. INTRODUCTION

HEALTHCARE providers, health plans, private payers, government programs and clearing houses (TPA, EDI services) are all impacted by HIPAA. This short paper outlines Acordex's understanding of the HIPAA initiative and how we can help you ensure compliance.

II. BASIC HIPAA REQUIREMENTS

Portability. Methods of presenting information must be compatible with everyone's systems. The same medical record must be readable at any provider's office. The solution must be technology-neutral.

Privacy. Providers have concerns over protecting the privacy of their patients' records. Patient consent forms can have patient-controlled limitations on who may see the information. HIPAA requires honoring this. In the absence of patient limitations, the physician or provider must have a medical need to know.

Protected Health Information (PHI) includes any individually identifiable information that is transmitted from one place to another. Patient

records, EOBs, Op Notes and many other scanned document images are covered. PHI does not include anonymous data used for research if there is no method to deduce the identity of the patient from the published results.

Timeframe. Compliance is required by April 14, 2003. The Compliance Act of December 27, 2001 requires at least testing by this date, and no penalties before October 16, 2003.

Entities. Business associates contracted by a covered entity also have responsibility.

Reasonableness standard: Security should be consistent with best practices today, not taken to the extreme.

The requirements listed above reflect Acordex's understanding of the HIPAA requirements that pertain to imaging systems. This should not be taken as a comprehensive summary of HIPAA. Please refer to primary sources for authoritative information.

III. ACORDEX FEATURES

The entities section (above) clearly indicates that imaging systems vendors are involved. This means that Acordex, if contracted by your hospital or clinic, will work with you to help implement your HIPAA strategy. We fully expect you to give us requirements that may require special features in our imaging products. We can, in turn, offer ideas based on our work with other health care facilities.

The portability requirement is addressed by our use of Internet standards. A provider needs just a standard Netscape or Internet Explorer or compatible browser to view images. All imaging specific software is auto-downloaded on demand from the Acordex image server.

Privacy requirements are addressed by encrypting the document's access and even the image itself if desired. Using this encryption, the Acordex image server will transmit images under the control a third party software program. For example your hospital database can be programmed to know the encryption. It can then authorize a user to see a document only after the user has logged onto the database. Your database decides, based on who the user is, whether the requested document should be seen. Also, your database has the opportunity to keep a record of which documents each person has viewed.

Acordex can easily help you meet the HIPAA timeframe. All of the features described in this paper are complete, mature software that is currently in use.

V. CONCLUSION

Acordex will be a responsive and capable member of your HIPAA compliance team. Although we are not compliance consultants, we are aware of the demands being placed on hospitals and clinics and have experience helping customers in the health care field implement their HIPAA program. Acordex products include features that specifically address the requirements HIPAA places on portability, privacy, timeframe and reasonableness standards. □