

# Information Management in Healthcare



By Dan Kinsella

Healthcare is one of the most data intensive industries in the world. Regulatory factors, industry advanced technology, complex financing and payment arrangements all contribute to the “data wars” that are waged on a 24/7 basis in hospitals across the country. Physician practices also engage in similar skirmishes, but with less information system capability.

Transforming data to information is the central challenge in healthcare. How often have you heard a colleague state that they were “data rich” and “information poor?” Or, for that matter, that they were “drowning in a sea of data?”

The root causes of these problems are varied and deeply entrenched in the various administrative, clinical and financial processes of our healthcare system. Ironically, advances in computer system technology seem only to create more data, with too often a very marginally proportional amount of information.

So, what is “information” and how is it different from “data?” Like beauty, information is in the eye of the beholder – in other words it is relative to the function of the person in the organization who is viewing it. Information then is data that is available in a meaningful way, at an appropriate time, to a person for whom it is relevant. Creating more “information” requires a better understanding of the needs of the users of the information. Data on the other hand is mostly the “exhaust” of a business process or function... it may become information only through its delivery to someone who can use it.

The process of engineering the flow of data selectively and in a timely fashion to those who can use it is known as Information Management (IM). Within the healthcare industry there is a body of academic research around IM as it relates to clinical outcomes and the development of best practices and care protocols.

As a CIO in healthcare, you are entrusted with the “Information” function (the tag on your desk doesn’t say Chief Data Officer does it?). Sure there may be a Clinical Informaticist and others with “information” in their title, but you are the steward, the engineer, the complaint department.

What can you do to increase the output of information in your organization? Is there a “killer app” that represents your IM “Easy Button?” Perhaps, but like most things of value, it doesn’t come easy.

Start with planning. Consider the next update to your Information Systems plan – consider a focus on IM.



- Look at the landscape of your enterprise and **prioritize** (80/20 rule) – “What are the functions that if enabled with true information would have the greatest impact on your business?”
- **Categorize** your needs and look for solutions for common problems that can be shared. How many report writers do you need in your organization? If the need is for access to information, are you overlooking online inquiries as an alternative to paper?
- Look at your **ecosystem** and the infrastructure components that can improve the IM infrastructure.
- Understand the components of **IM architecture** – including portals, report writers, report distribution, data marts/ware houses, decision support, on-line queries and executive information systems.
- Develop a **Road Map** that allows you to make incremental investments with an eye toward a future state.
- Don’t rely too much on the vendors of your core transaction systems. By and large those products are geared to capture and process data – and they do that very efficiently.

The Revere Group, an NTT Data Company, has the technical skills and industry experience to assist you in establishing an IM Road Map for your organization. Contact us to discuss how we can conduct an IM readiness review – whether you are in the planning stage, looking to make a major purchase or considering an upgrade of a proven solution we can assist you in driving more information out of your available resources.