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Health Information Compliance Alert

HIT: Looking for Compliance Solutions? Look to the Cloud

Explore these unexpected benefits of abandoning your client-server EHR.

You may have heard HIT experts say that "the Cloud" protects your HIT compliance more than a client-server ever can. But if you're like many of us, you may feel like you've walked into the middle of the discussion without much background. Here's a quick cheat sheet that explains what the "client server vs. cloud" debate really means for your health care organization.

If your health care organization was an early EHR adopter, you may still have a client-server EHR. That is, the client (your office or facility) hosts (stores) PHI in a server (storage) that is physically located on site at your practice.

Client servers have worked well for some providers, but they require equipment and personnel that smaller providers often lack. Client servers require a dedicated IT staffer to ensure server reliability, smooth upgrades, network security, and myriad other concerns.

If you have a cloud-based EHR, the vendor provides software and PHI storage from a server offsite and you access your patients' medical records through a secure connection. PHI is available to you from any location (and from any device) that has a secure connection to the Internet.

Advantages of cloud-based EHR:

Easier set up: If you choose a cloud-based EHR, you don't need to have an 'IT guy' on site. PHI is stored and protected offsite under the care the vendor's IT staff.

Smoother workflow: Your vendor's IT team performs updates and maintenance overnight to protect workflow so that clinicians at your practice never miss a beat.

You can work from anywhere: If your clinicians work at multiple locations, the cloud is an appealing solution.

Reduced risk of data breaches: While some providers may fret about how safe PHI is in the cloud, it's likely more secure than many client server environments. Why?

Data breaches that plague health care providers are often the result of lost or stolen hardware, and the cloud limits these causes for breaches.

Outsourcedbackup and disaster planning: If your EHR is on a client server, it's your problem. If you're on the cloud, it's your vendor's problem.