

The Meaningful Use of HITECH Act 2009

Student's Name

Learning Institution

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In 2009, the USA government signed the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) into law as a part of the already existing America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009). The primary objective of the Act is to ensure a secure and healthy adoption of the health information technology for social health developments. The Act led to a series of changes in the health industry including with the methods used to collect, analyze, and store medical data (USA Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). The Act has four subtitles that seek to promote the meaning use of the health information data without any intentional or unintentional risks to the human rights including the rights to privacy. For the past five years, the USA population has engaged in a debate on the applicability of the HITECH Act and the merits and demerits in relevance to the meaningful use as explained in the first Subtitle, 'improving health Care Quality and Services.'

The HITECH Act seeks to increase the efficacy of the health services industry by promoting communication and easy access to data and information for decision-making. In Subtitle A, the Act identifies three major approaches that might increase the quality and efficacy of the services offered to the patients. Nevertheless, it is impartial to argue that, despite the availability of the integrated Electronic Health Records, the HITECH Act fails to ensure standardized use thus leading to various challenges. The use of EHR has different impacts on the stakeholders thus leading to varying levels of compliance. For instance, 64% of USA citizens do not use health portals; 35% said they would use the services if the government maintained the health databases instead of the independent health providers.

The Act has lead to tremendous growth in the health industry by allowing effective communication among the stakeholders. Through the meaningful use of the Act, it is

currently possible for an organization to adopt an independent website and offer patients portals for easy diagnosis, health information, and advice. The use of the health information technology also increases the efficacy of the health research by increasing the number of participants and allowing the different organization to triangulate their findings and come up with comprehensive conclusions.

According to Menachemi and Collum (2011), the average marginal price of using EHR services in private hospitals has increased due to the low adoption rate. Further studies by Moreno, Peikes and Krilla (2010) identified that the lack of harmonized set of benefits and risks by the HITECH Act was the leading cause of consumer's reluctance to use the services. In other words, although HITECH defines the meaningful use of Information Technology, the Act does not define specific stakeholders' engagements thus leading to the consumer's vulnerability. Other challenges facing the application of HITECH include customers' security concerns as described in Subtitle three of the Act and the growing health costs.

Following the health services demands in the USA, and the inevitable technology revolution, HITECH is a necessary adoption by the government and other stakeholders. The primary advantages include the efficiency in public research, immediate communication between the doctor and the patients, and availability of referral data for future developments. However, the governments should adopt a policy that standardizes the use of EHRs and other HIT elements to increase adoption. For instance, Moreno, Peikes and Krilla (2010) posit that the government might oversee the storage and release of patients' data through an integrated database to minimize the institutional usage of the patients' data.

References

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