

Assignment 13.1

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Technology and the current healthcare environment can undoubtedly lead to the rapid growth of telemedicine and other alternative delivery methods. Towards the beginning of 2020, CMS declared an emergency indicating the need for telemedicine so that providers can safely provide care for patients due to COVID-19 (Jin, 2020). The increased use and demand for telemedicine, increased convenience for patients, and technological ability will increase its use into the future.

The industry should focus on setting EHR standards, protocols, and technologies that promote telemedicine's safe and efficient use to establish security and privacy protection. In 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) allowed providers to use commonly used video chatting applications to provide telehealth. Examples are Skype, Zoom, Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, and Google Hangouts. HHS urged care providers to give their patients notification that using such common third-party applications could allow potential privacy risks. HHS also urged care providers to enable all possible privacy and encryption settings when using them. These platforms have been allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Still, care providers should know that continuing to use them in the future may violate HIPAA Rules and lead to compliance issues (Jin, 2020). Developing video communication software that is HIPAA compliant will be a great asset for telemedicine.

Despite telemedicine's excellent service during the COVID-19 pandemic, HIPAA requirements will likely be reinstated when the emergency is over. Providers should prepare to transition back away from overly relying on telehealth or relying on it at all if they did not already provide that method of healthcare. If an entity has been running a telehealth platform during the pandemic that does not meet HIPAA requirements, it should expect to become

compliant maybe within a few months. HIPAA requirements are vital for the protection of patient data. It is also likely that regulations will continue to change to increasingly allow telehealth, dramatically changing the healthcare environment. One example is the CONNECT for Health Act of 2021. The goal of this act is to increase the use of telehealth by eliminating geographic requirements and permanently expanding originating sites (Scott, 2021).

References

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