Watson Health

Executive Brief

# Data sharing vs. data security: Not an ‘either-or’ proposition

Data sharing is commonly cited as a key to success under value-based care models, which rely heavily on the collaborative efforts of a variety of care providers to improve clinical outcomes.

As a result, healthcare organizations frequently pass imaging data back and forth on CDs, online or through electronic health records (EHRs). In addition, organizations are now sharing data on mobile devices, making it possible for clinicians to access images outside of medical facilities.

But while this data sharing is altruistic and time- and energy-saving in intent, it does have a daunting flipside. Namely, the more data is shared, the more susceptible it becomes to a variety of threats — from cybercrime to employee theft to simple carelessness that results in legal violations.

## Feeling the sting of a data breach

When data breaches occur, the fallout can be devastating. Department of Health and Human Services' penalties for HIPAA violations can range from $100 to $50,000 per violation, with a maximum penalty of $1.5 million per year for violations of an identical provision.[1] Organizations can also be subject to expensive litigation emanating from security breaches, not to mention the negative impact such incidents are likely to have on a healthcare organization's overall reputation.

HIPAA violations can result in substantial fines, ranging from $100 to $50,000 per violation, with a maximum penalty of $1.5 million per year.[1]

The challenge for healthcare organizations is a tricky one as they seek to provide clinicians with easy access to needed images and data, while also reducing the risk of security breaches — a risk exacerbated by the way in which medical images are stored. Many hospitals currently store and access imaging data through various workstations and multiple PACS. With no overarching storage archive, there are several possible points of failure, introducing the potential for security problems.

## Securing data in a VNA 'vault'

A vendor neutral archive (VNA), combined with a universal viewer, can not only provide access to any image, anywhere, any time, but also stores and manage images in a single location. Because a VNA keeps all information in one centralized data repository, organizations can reduce the number of entry points into their systems, making it easier to manage and protect healthcare data.

Some VNAs also provide an extra layer of protection by encrypting archived data. This feature is a welcome addition for IT professionals who recognize the multiple benefits of streamlining systems. After all, with just one system to manage, IT staff are then free to focus on providing greater protection of sensitive information through antivirus software, firewalls and other solutions.

## Reducing vulnerabilities by limiting access

A single storage system also means fewer clinicians have access, and as a result, there's a lower likelihood of these storage systems becoming compromised. In addition, VNAs can protect data even further by providing role-based access. This safeguard ensures that only specific individuals view the content they need to perform their jobs.

Perhaps the greatest advantage, though, is that a VNA offers these security advantages without limiting access to the images and data that clinicians and care teams need. In the struggle between data sharing and data security, the right VNA can make everyone a winner.

To learn about Watson Health's award winning VNA solution, IBM iConnect® Enterprise Archive, visit **ibm.com/watson-health/imaging**

## About Watson Health Imaging

Watson Health Imaging, a segment of IBM Watson Health, is a leading provider of innovative artificial intelligence, enterprise imaging and interoperability solutions that seek to advance healthcare. Its Merge branded enterprise imaging solutions facilitate the management, sharing and storage of billions of patient medical images.

With solutions that have been used by providers for more than 25 years, Watson Health Imaging is helping to reduce costs, improve efficiencies and enhance the quality of healthcare worldwide.

## Footnotes:

1. HIPAA Violations and Enforcement. American Medical Association. Accessed January 2018.



IBM Watson Health

75 Binney Street, Cambridge, MA 02142

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