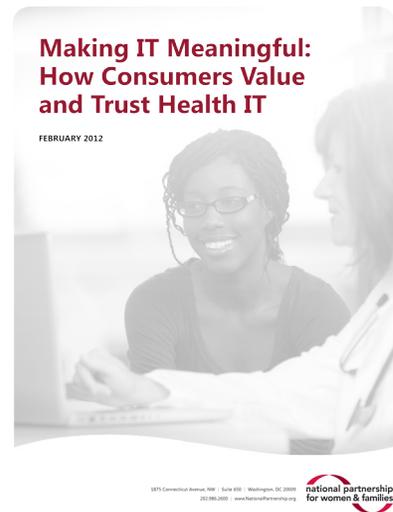


I. Executive Summary

The widespread adoption of health information technology (health IT) has become an urgent national priority. However, for the promise of health IT to be realized, consumers must both trust and value it. With this in mind, the National Partnership for Women & Families and Professor Alan Westin, Ph.D., in consultation with multi-stakeholder experts in the health care, health policy, and information privacy fields, designed a national public opinion survey to assess patients' experiences with and trust in the use of health IT. Harris Interactive conducted the study online within the United States from August 3 – 22, 2011, from a sample of respondents representative of the total U.S. population 18 years of age and older, including an oversample of Hispanic adults.



Goals of the Survey

1. Explore whether trust or perceived value in health IT helps consumers benefit from the more widespread use of EHRs.
2. Measure existing levels of patient trust in how providers use paper and electronic medical record systems today and develop a demographic profile, or segmentation, of consumers most and least worried about health IT privacy. This profile can be used to identify individuals who would benefit from engagement and education to improve their comfort levels with electronic records.
3. Inform future definitions of MU and other public policies and programs related to health IT and health reform by identifying a) what is important to patients with respect to how EHRs could improve their health and care, and b) how to improve their trust in both providers and their EHRs to protect privacy.
4. Measure experience with MU and HIT-enabled aspects of health reform over time by establishing a baseline of consumer attitude and opinions today, and creating a publicly-available instrument others may use as these initiatives progress.

Survey Population

- ▶ Respondents were patients who met two main criteria: 1) those who have an ongoing relationship with a main care provider, and 2) those who know what kind of record system – electronic or paper – this provider uses.
- ▶ This yielded a total respondent pool of 1,961 adults, which is representative of 56% of the adult population.
- ▶ Of the 1,961 respondents, 58.8% had medical records in electronic systems and 41.2% said their doctor primarily relies on paper records. These percentages are consistent with the National Center for Health Statistics' reported adoption rates.

Key Findings

- ▶ Patients, regardless of the type of record their physician has, see value in EHRs. EHRs far outpace paper in perceived impact on quality of care.

- ▶ 73% of EHR respondents say their doctor’s use of an EHR has a very or somewhat positive impact on the overall quality of health care services, compared to only 26% of paper system respondents who feel the same about their physician’s record system.
- ▶ Those EHR respondents with online access to their health information see greater value in EHRs for both their providers and themselves. Online access is correlated with enhanced trust.
 - ▶ Moreover, of those with online access, 80% use it, with almost half using it 3 or more times per year and a quarter using it 7 or more times per year.
 - ▶ The 80% of patients who use their online access are more likely to:
 - ▶ Personally find and correct errors or incomplete information in their medical record;
 - ▶ Understand their health conditions better;
 - ▶ Keep up with their medications;
 - ▶ Say they trust their doctor and staff to protect their patient rights; and
 - ▶ Say they feel well informed by their doctors and staff about privacy issues.
- ▶ 3 out of 4 paper-system respondents want their doctor to adopt an EHR, but more work must be done to build a *consumer* case for quality.
 - ▶ Data indicates that consumers do not appear to connect *EHR adoption* to improved quality. Therefore it is and will continue to be important to showcase how EHRs are being used in a way meaningful to consumers.
- ▶ People are concerned about the safety of their health information. Majorities of both EHR and paper respondents agreed that, “widespread adoption of electronic health record systems will lead to even more personal information being lost or stolen than we have now.”
- ▶ However, patients generally trust EHRs more than paper records:
 - ▶ Both groups (EHR and paper) see great value in EHRs when it comes to enhancing elements of patient privacy.
 - ▶ Both groups also rated EHR systems higher than paper in respect to the following four capabilities:
 1. Giving patients confidence that their medical and health information is safe so that unauthorized people don’t see it;
 2. Complying with privacy and confidentiality laws and rules;
 3. Giving patients more control over how their personal medical and health information is used for purposes beyond their direct care;
 4. Earning the trust of patients in the way their personal medical and health information is being handled by their provider’s medical record system.
- ▶ In addition, more than 90% of both paper and EHR respondents trust their doctors to protect their health information.
- ▶ There is a relationship between EHR respondents’ privacy/trust concerns and the value they perceive in EHRs.
 - ▶ Those who are more likely to perceive and experience value of their record systems are those who are more comfortable in their privacy views, and vice versa.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Patients want EHRs and want them used well.
 - ▶ Between 88 – 97% of EHR respondents and 80 – 97% of paper respondents said that EHRs would be useful in accomplishing or improving upon certain key care elements such as:
 - ▶ Making sure that all the different health care providers who treat a patient have timely access to all the relevant information for his/her care;

- ▶ Getting tests or lab results to patients in a timely manner;
 - ▶ Helping patients make sure the information in their medical record is accurate;
 - ▶ Helping patients follow their providers' instructions for treatment or care of themselves or a family member;
 - ▶ Helping patients make or change their appointments;
 - ▶ Helping patients communicate directly with health care providers; and
 - ▶ Helping patients take and refill their medications as prescribed.
- ▶ Allowing patients to have online access is key, as this is the critical point which delivers value, raises consumers' trust in EHRs, and raises consumers' support of EHR implementation.
 - ▶ Providers – physicians in particular – are crucial to providing such guidance and, ultimately, key to cultivating trust in EHRs. Across all respondents, individual trust in one's provider when it comes to privacy protection is tremendously high, and this trust flows to the physician's use of an EHR.

For more information, visit www.nationalpartnership.org/hit, contact info@nationalpartnership.org, or call 202-986-2600.