Behavioral Health Information Technology

Name:

Institution:

**Introduction**

The utilization of health information technology is essential in healthcare because it has been demonstrated to impact the delivery of safe and quality health care significantly (Ranallo et al., 2016). The Harbor City Behavioral Health Center has an IT department that maintains the patient database and service portal and enhances the operation of all of its departments. Currently, the IT department utilizes information technology services, including emails, messaging, and websites, to service patient data operations and ensure smooth delivery of care. The Center has also transitioned to Singlehop web-based hosting service to ensure compliance with HIPPA rules. However, the application of information technology at HCBHC has been slow and limited, making it challenging for its healthcare providers to enhance the quality of life for the people they serve.

**Current IT systems**

After reviewing the HCBHC's annual summary of its annual report, the current IT system capable of supporting the Center's targeted goals for improvement is the single-hop system. Singlehop is a web-based hosting service that offers compliance-focused solutions to organizations. For HCBHC, transitioning to single-hop services improves its compliance to HIPPA directions. According to HIPPA, health organizations must ensure patient information privacy and confidentiality and report any data breaches that affect more than 500 customers to HHS and individuals. Also, if a healthcare organization is partnering with another company to facilitate its business function, it must comply with HIPPA data privacy standards. HCBHC is partnering with a third-party company to manage the Center's information systems, and by signing with singlhop, it guarantees both organizations' compliance to safeguard patient information. This technology helps HCBHC to meet its target goal of security and compliance.

Apart from Singlehop system, HCBHC also currently employs the use of emails and patient portal websites to manage its information and accomplish its goals. A patient portal website is a technology platform where patients have access to their personal health information at any place at any time. Through this portal, patients can access information regarding their medications, immunizations, lab results, and doctor's visits. Patient portals facilitate faster patient engagement with their physicians, saving on time and enabling patients or physicians to spot errors. As a result, using this system improves patient satisfaction and quality of care. HCBHC has also increased messaging via emails, where patients can make inquiries, book appointments, and follow-ups on their health. Messaging via emails is an innovative way to enhance patient engagement in their own health care, which is useful in meeting HCBHC's targeted goal of ensuring patient-centered care.

**Improvements in information technology**

With the evolving technology, there are significant tools and services in terms of hardware, software, training, and bandwidth that HCBHC can put in place to improve efficiency and patient outcomes. The presence of IT hardware in the behavioral health center is essential to ensure appropriate diagnostic and monitoring of patients. One example of IT hardware that HCBHC should utilize is wearable trackers or sensors to monitor patients' whereabouts (Ranallo et al., 2016). The Center can use these devices to ensure patients adhere to treatment rules, especially at-risk individuals. Other tools include medical scanners, such as MRIs and CT scans, to help physicians understand what is happening inside a patient's body without surgery (OCHIT, 2012). When it comes to software technology, HCBHC should utilize electronic health records (EHRs) to collect patient information, including history, lab results, and treatments, useful in improving care (Ranallo et al., 2016). EHRs are designed so that various hospital systems can share patient information, and this seamless flow of information helps increase patient involvement, care coordination, and improved patient outcomes. EHRs also help promote patient information safety since they are encrypted.

Another significant IT system that HCBHC can utilize is telehealth, which is useful in patient monitoring while at home. HCBHC wishes to extend its behavioral health services to the community to help the aging population and youths with substance use. Telehealth solutions will help physicians provide their health in the community at a distance, including patient education, psychiatric evaluations, and therapy. This IT solution will also help patients easily access care, reduce the barrier of stigmatization in youths, and ensure continuity of care (OCHIT, 2012). HBHC will also need to improve its bandwidth capacity to ensure smooth operation and coordination between departments. HCBHC functions as a hospital, and the recommended bandwidth for a hospital is 100Mbps, which will support the Center's web browsing, emails, remote monitoring, and use of electronic health records (Ranallo et al., 2016). HCBHC will also need to improve the functioning of the HR department. Hence, it will need to utilize an e-learning strategy to offer continuous training to its staff to improve healthcare delivery.

In summary, the growing use of substance use among youths and the aging population has introduced a challenge for HCBHC and the community. Hence, there is a growing need for IT utilization to support patient monitoring and bring healthcare close to the patient. While HCBHC is currently using single-hop, patient portals, and emails to improve patient outcomes, there are additional IT systems and tools in terms of hardware, software, training, and security that, when utilized, can help to meet its targeted goal of enhancing patient outcomes.

References

OCHIT. (2012). *Behavioral health roundtable: Using information technology to integrate behavioral health and primary care* [Ebook]. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved 13 April 2021, from.

Ranallo, P., Kilbourne, A., Whatley, A., & Pincus, H. (2016). Behavioral Health Information Technology: From Chaos to Clarity. *Health Affairs*, *35*(6), 1106-1113. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0013