

Addressing Growing Privacy Concerns in Virtual Care

December 22, 2021

Across the globe, people are still hesitant to trust telehealth or virtual care services. According to a report from cybersecurity company Kaspersky, 74% of providers have experienced cases where patients refused video calls with medical staff.

The top reason? Privacy concerns (52%). Other concerns included:

- 33% simply lack trust in telehealth
- 32% are unwilling to appear on video
- 30 percent lack the correct equipment

Over eight in ten (81%) healthcare providers also state that clinicians have expressed concerns about patient privacy when conducting remote sessions. (1)

Canadians Leading the Way in Telehealth Adoption

The reason Canadians are concerned about medical data protection may be due to uncertainty about who is protecting their data and what data is being protected as well as the complexity and multiple Canadian privacy laws, says online software marketplace vendor Capterra. According to Capterra:

- 34% of existing telemedicine patients do not know what information they share with their doctors via software
- 28% of health app users are unaware of what data they share with health app providers, nor how those providers can use it
- 16% of users have no idea how their doctor protects their medical data.

Earlier this year, Capterra reported that each Canadian province has its own privacy legislation in addition to the federal law protecting privacy, and that medical data breaches have already occurred in Canada, including one that affected over 3,000 patients.

Despite these concerns, researchers found that 61 percent of Canadian respondents believed that implementing AI-powered tools would improve the patient experience. Based on this statistic, Canada is one of the leading believers in the innovation of telehealth when compared with Germany and the U.K. (57 percent) and France and Australia (53 percent). (2)

Experts' guidelines on data privacy

Security and privacy concerns are likely to drive organizations to change their practices and processes as telehealth evolves.

Proactive measures, such as ensuring only the appropriate personnel have access to the data they need to perform their duties, are of paramount importance. The first step is to clean up the mountains of improper entitlements, and many organizations are realizing that this mandate is not as easy as it may appear at first glance, but it must be accomplished.

Experts predict that future organizations are likely to focus on fine-tuning their practices for a basic inventory of all their data repositories and more in-depth analyses of their access controls. Correction and certification of entitlements will be expanded, automation will be critical, and businesses will expect to participate in these processes on a regular basis. These measures result in IT and Security teams accepting this onus, as well as promoting a culture of Security First across all business units within an organization. (3)

The protection of sensitive data, including employee and customer information, is no longer a choice - it is a must. Whether it's regulatory bodies or internal auditors enforcing privacy and data protection practices, the repercussions are enough for companies to apply a Least Privilege Access model.

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Sources:

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