

Book: The Medical Privacy Rule: A Guide for Employers and Health Care Providers

Author: William S. Hubbartt

Publisher: Hubbartt & Associates, 2002, St. Charles, IL

Reviewer: James R. Boyd, MBA, CFAAMA
Health Programs Analyst
Department of Medical Assistance Services
Richmond, VA

Book Review

With HIPAA now a familiar acronym, health care providers, systems, and insurers are bracing themselves for the implementation of the Privacy component of this intimidating regulation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued the Standards For Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information in the Federal Register on December 28, 2000 as a component of HIPAA. Most organizations covered by these regulations, generally referred to as the Medical Privacy Rule, must be in compliance by April 14, 2003. Containing over 30 pages of fine print, and formatted in triple columns, this regulation is a challenge to read and to understand. For most administrators in small practices, the more important concern is how to implement the dense requirements of this industry changing approach to protecting health information. The Medical Privacy Rule: A Guide for Employers and Health Care Providers gives step-by-step direction to accomplish implementation efficiently and effectively.

This book reads easily, and is presented as a well-organized manual, which distills the material into a series of tabulated “snapshots”. According to the author, the book was designed to be a “framework from which to adapt or prepare privacy policies to help your organization fulfill the spirit and intent of the law.” The format allows readers to quickly identify sections that apply to their organization, and find policies, forms, and references to fulfill the requirements for that particular section. Although sufficiently technical to allow for further research, each section is concise and well balanced. Some of the sections of the book include: New rights and rules related to medical privacy; Which organizations are covered; Which personnel within the organization are impacted by the rule; and What covered organizations should be doing now. The sections discussing government access to protected health information, and the use or disclosure of information for research could be particularly enlightening for administrators involved with teaching hospitals or large healthcare systems. Other sections address staff training, and dissemination of information to family members, health plans, and business associates. Checklists and sample forms are included, to assist health leaders in tailoring policies and procedures for their organization. Hubbartt structures these tools to form a template for a Standard Operating Procedures Manual that addresses Medical Privacy. The deceptively open format of this book provides a resource that is informative, accurate, and helpful. Even confusing and difficult questions are presented with confidence. After reading through each section, I gained a greater appreciation for the complexity of the Medical Privacy Rule. This guide provides illumination of those complexities, and a clear map by which to negotiate the road to compliance.

The author is a well-respected Human Resources Management professional whose expertise has allowed him to present the details of the Medical Privacy Rule without biased commentary. I recommend this book as a handy reference source for health care professionals seeking guidance and a practical framework for their Medical Privacy compliance programs.

Copyright 2003© American Academy of Medical Administrators. All rights reserved.