

The affordable care act reducing paperwork and administrative costs critical thin...

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The Affordable Care Act is a law that seeks to implement reforms in the health services to ensure that every citizen has access to quality health care. This act was made into law by President Barak Obama on March 23 2010. These reforms also target the insurance sector, with these changes stipulated to be complete and working in full force by the year 2014. By making policies that regulate investments, the act provides a way to increase the quality of health care for American citizens . The citizens are not the only group of people that gains from these reforms; health care providers also reap the benefits of improving the lives that people lead by providing this care. One of the components that constitute this act is Reducing Paperwork and Administrative Costs. This paper will focus on this particular component of the ACA.

Background information

The health sector is one of the few remaining industries that still make use of paper records to store data from the various facets of health care. This is a time consuming way to store information especially in this digital age. There are also numerous risks that accompany this form of recording information, such as fires and natural disasters. In the event that there is a fire, this data becomes extremely difficult to salvage, as is the case with natural disasters such as the recent Hurricane Sandy. It is with this information in mind that the Affordable Care Act sets out to enforce a number of changes as far as billings are concerned. In addition, it is necessary that health plans and insurance schemes work hand in hand to implement these changes to ensure that private health information is transmitted in a secured electronic method.

Using an electronic method to store and exchange this data not only saves time, it also drastically reduces administrative costs. The result of this is that health care is simplified for the providers, and accessible to the people who need it the most. Overall, this will improve the quality of services that are given. There are many facets through which this is achieved. Firstly, electronic storage of patients' records reduces the amount of paper used as everything goes digital with the click of a button. Secondly, operating heads are reduced because fewer personnel are required to coordinate these records as opposed to manually doing the work on paper. This is also a big advantage to health care providers because it is accurate, leaving very little margin for error.

Parties with vested interests

In the efforts to improve medical care by reducing the amount of paper work done, the Act provides room for a number of parties with vested interests. The first of these parties is of course the hospital. By shifting from manually storing data on paper to a more advanced electronic system, the hospital administration is in a position to collect information as pertains to the patient's health status. In addition, this gives health professionals an accurate way of keeping track of progress that the patient makes, thus allowing them to access quality health care. Secondly, this also aids hospital staff to effectively utilize their overtime shifts well. By saving the time required to manually sort and retrieve patient details, health professionals have ample time to attend to their patients, thus reducing the chances of errors resulting from misdiagnosis.

This scenario is best played out in many hospitals nation wide. Think about how many times you have had a doctor attend to you, and not for the first time, yet you have to undergo repeated tests simply because your record files could not be traced. The problem is further compounded in patients with chronic debilitating ailments. Not only do they have to keep repeating tests, they also have to carry with them physical records to show results. This disjointed provision of service lowers the quality of healthcare. By incorporating an electronic system that replaces the paperwork, there is definitely going to be a marked improvement in the health services accessed by the American citizen.

A second category concerned with the reforms facilitated by the Act is the insurance sector. Many times patients will find themselves hospitalized for one reason or the other. As the bills accrue, some rest in the knowledge that the insurance cover they have will have these settled, only to come to the harsh realization that this is not possible. Why? Documented proof of coverage cannot be traced. By putting in place an electronic system, this will be a thing of the past. Patients will be able to access the status of their cover at the hospital in real time. This will also provide seamless co-ordination between the hospital and the concerned insurance companies, in effect, providing quality health care .

Pharmaceutical companies will also benefit from the integration of an electronic system. The conventional process that patients have had to follow over a period of time has been to get their doctors prescribe medicine, after which this medicine is purchased from the pharmacy. Ideally, the pharmacist will then enter the patient's data on paper then these records are stored for

future use. Technology will significantly reduce this lengthy process in this way; the doctor contacts the pharmacy attendant who will then take note of the prescribed medicine. The pharmacist enters this data and stores it, so that the patient only shows up for payment and to pick their medicine. This process is known as electronic prescribing, and is an effective way of reducing paperwork as well as administrative costs.

Evidence based research has shown an improvement in the services offered. In 2009, the government provided over 19 billion dollars to cater for the adoption of the electronic health system under a program known as HIT- Health Information Technology. In addition to that, another 2 billion dollars was dispensed for grants. While this was mandatory for federal health care programs, private health care providers implemented HIT at will. Another channel through which the reduction of paper work was realized was with recognition by the Institute of Medicine. This has led to health professionals being trained on the need for going digital as far as health care is concerned. As a result, by the time these professionals are absorbed into the institution of health care, they are already aware of the procedures in the electronic procedures. In the end, patients are able to get proper health care as well as receive insurance coverage .

Implementation of the Affordable Care Act

The implementation of this Act has been sequenced in what is known as a timeline. The timeline shows everything that has been achieved ever since the Act was passed into law in 2010. Some of the reforms that have been enacted as far as reducing paperwork and administrative costs is concerned

include the standardization of billing systems across the board. This in essence, means that the cost of health care does not have huge disparities in the health centers. As far as the insurance sector is concerned, health professionals are saved the hassle of dealing with insurance incompetence and bureaucratic procedures. The end result of this is that the health professionals are able to attend to their patients effectively.

This positive changes spill over to the pharmacy department where, with less paper work, the hospital is able to cut on administrative costs, at the same time ensuring that patients receive excellent services. Future plans for the insurance sector that seek to reduce paper workload include the opening of Affordable Insurance Exchanges. An exchange refers to an innovative marketplace where small enterprises and persons get to purchase affordable and approved health plans from insurance companies . This in essence means that, as an individual, it is possible to get health cover for you and your family by registering for private or public health insurance cover. With technology, this will be a process that the patient is able to finish within record time. From the hospital's end, it also reduces the amount of paperwork due to the fact that there is synchrony between the hospital, the insurance company and the patient. Administrative costs are also reduced because less time and workforce are needed to get the job at hand completed. The government has also released grants to facilitate the integration of the electronic system by the health sector. In the long run, the implementation of this Act it takes quality care to the patients in a professional way .

Summary justification

The Affordable Care Act will reduce the amount of paper work, so that instead of health professionals devoting much of their time to it, they have ample time to attend to the patients. This way, administrative procedures are also significantly reduced, and this, in effect creates a channel for the delivery of quality health care . This, along with the digitalization of the records department ushers the health practitioner into trends of the digital age of the 21st century. It is clear that the reforms have blown the winds of change across the landscape of healthcare, with the results been quality and accessible health care to American citizens. This is in addition to the security provided by wholesome health insurance covers irrespective of one's work, or health status.

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