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5 steps for preventing the insider threat

by [Guest Author](#) [January 3, 2017](#) [0 Comments](#)



Digital communications and information technologies are reshaping modern healthcare. They're also opening



hospitals up to new security threats. In this guest post, Kon Leong, president, CEO and co-founder of a specialized provider of electronic content archiving software, offers five ways data protection and fraud prevention stakeholders can protect their facilities from the threat from within.

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Electronic health records (EHR) have improved transferability and accessibility of patient information, allowing for better diagnostic accuracy and more efficient coordination of treatments and services. Smart monitoring devices give healthcare professionals real-time updates on patients, and various forms of digital communication, such as video chat, healthcare consultation apps and email, enable doctors to provide care for patients regardless of their location.

Ensuring security

But with all these new types of sensitive healthcare data being created, who's ensuring it's secured?

Healthcare data security initiatives are often determined by compliance regulations, which unfortunately have trouble keeping pace with [technology](#). More data and greater accessibility means greater opportunity for exploitation and, over the years, stolen healthcare records have become extremely valuable, with healthcare fraud causing financial losses in the [tens of billions](#) every year.

We know about the threat presented by the likes of anonymous hackers, activists and state-sponsored entities. But disturbingly, an inordinate portion of healthcare fraud is committed by bad or negligent employees within the healthcare system.

They come in many forms:

- A [low-level administrator](#) with high-level access, selling EHRs to a private practice or marketer
- A doctor intentionally overcharging or receiving kickbacks for performing an expensive procedure, and
- An ex-employee submitting false claims under a patient's identity.

Data protection, fraud prevention

With that in mind, here's how data protection and fraud prevention stakeholders can rethink their defense strategies



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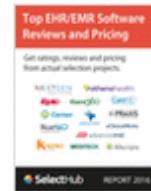
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and account for the real threat to the healthcare system – the threat from within.

- 1. Training employees:** In order to implement a successful data protection strategy, employees have to be trained on best practices for use of EHR systems and handling of patient information, as well as recognizing and addressing inappropriate behavior. In certain cases, security risks arise from a negligent employee being influenced by a third party or another employee to release confidential information. Social engineering – the manipulation of others to obtain confidential information or to influence their behavior – is often a fundamental component of modern healthcare fraud, and inadequately-trained faculty only perpetuate its effectiveness.
- 2. Access controls:** Those who visit the doctor and notice an assistant entering their information into a computer or iPad might wonder who else has access to their information. This is a legitimate concern, and access controls are an essential component in data protection initiatives. According to [the Department of Health and Human Services](#), access controls are an effective method of preventing inappropriate access to EHRs, fraud schemes and false claims. Admin should only have access to files fundamental to their position, and access privileges should be regularly reassessed and updated to reflect management changes, such as reassigned employees.
- 3. EHR review and audit:** A simple step that every facility can take to reduce fraud is to assign specific employees to regularly review a sample of claims and EHRs for any suspicious activity. Organizations should also perform regular log audits of EHR systems, which is essential to mitigating the risks of employee misconduct. [According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#), during review, special attention should be paid to particular actions such as copy-pasting, and delayed alterations to records, which can be indicative of fraudulent behavior. Additionally, analytics technologies can identify when employees consistently view a particular type of record for



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longer than reasonably necessary or access an excessive number of files, behavior that may correlate with fraudulent activity.

- 4. Locking down all systems:** Important data can also be created outside of EHR systems, so these systems should be protected and monitored as well. For instance, file shares containing sensitive information present a security risk if left unmanaged, and thus file analysis should be performed to identify and remediate sensitive files. Remediation might include applying limited access privileges, retention policies or even deletion, and these actions should comply with ongoing data management policies so file analysis doesn't need to be performed repeatedly.
- 5. Email analytics:** Select communication patterns in emails can be indicative of misconduct. For instance, emails with particular words and word combinations, or correspondence patterns between particular members of the healthcare community that aren't necessary to one's job description, may suggest unlawful activity. Used in combination with additional behavioral metrics, unstructured analytics – the analysis of human-made data can be effective for detecting behavior that correlates with fraud. This requires information technology capable of accommodating and standardizing both structured and unstructured data.

Too many hospitals and providers haven't adjusted to the new breed of predator, or the modern security concerns that accompany the virtualization of healthcare records. For data protection stakeholders seeking to navigate the new landscape of healthcare data security, it will prove wise to have versatile data initiatives in place that can process and protect the entire spectrum of data sources.

Kon Leong is president, CEO and co-founder of [ZL Technologies](#), a specialized provider of electronic content archiving software for large enterprise environments. He's responsible for managing all aspects of the business, including strategy, finance, sales and marketing.



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