

HealthInfoNet Issue Brief

How Maine People View Medical Privacy January 2007

Background

- In late 2006, a Maine-based independent research firm conducted an extensive public opinion study concerning medical privacy and the trend toward increased use of electronic health information-sharing systems.
- 600 Mainers randomly selected from across the state were interviewed by telephone. Seventy-five individuals took part in eight focus groups in Presque Isle, Bangor, Lewiston and Portland.
- The federal government funded the research as part of a major national study that has been under way since mid-2006.

Key Findings

Researchers found that Maine people are:

- Worried that they--or their family members--will fall victim to a medical error
- Convinced that medical errors and poor quality healthcare can result from poor coordination and communication among their caregivers--a problem they believe is far too common
- Adamant that they do not want their personal medical information to be shared with their employer, their insurer or the government
- Interested in having convenient access to their own medical information to become more knowledgeable and more effective advocates for their care. (Example: They would be able to correct wrong, outdated or incomplete information in their records.)

When told about how electronic medical records and electronic information-sharing systems are now being used by caregivers to improve care, Maine people told researchers that they:

- Want doctors and other caregivers to have **greater access to all their medical information** so providers can make better and more-informed treatment decisions.
- Agree that **increased use of these systems should help improve the quality and the efficiency of the care** they receive through better coordination and communication among their caregivers.
- Support the use of electronic information-sharing systems to improve care---**but only if they can be assured that rigorous privacy and security protections are in place and the system is overseen by a trusted entity.**

*9 out of 10 Maine citizens think it is very important that their doctors have access to all of their medical records including primary care and specialist reports, test results and medications.**

HealthInfoNet (www.hinfonyet.org) is a Maine-based independent, nonprofit organization that is building a statewide electronic health information exchange system. The system is designed to improve the quality of care, reduce medical errors, reduce duplication of services, connect Maine to the nation's emerging information technology system, and provide consumers with access to their personal healthcare information.

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* Source: Critical Insights, 120 Exchange Street, Portland Maine- November 2006 telephone survey with random sample of 600 Maine residents