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The Benefits of Wealth Screening Patient Populations

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Why should your organization wealth screen patients?

Wealth screening is an efficient, cost-effective way to segment your patient population as your organization moves to identify potential grateful patient donors. By running HIPAA-approved demographic details against publicly available data, screening services are able to apply high-level capacity scores to most individuals. This allows your organization to approach donor bands strategically.

Patients with high capacity can be fast-tracked for individual major gift outreach. Individuals with lower capacity scores can be segmented for annual fund solicitations. Introducing additional screening services that factor in affinity scores or other modeling can further optimize your efforts.

By not screening your patients, your organization runs the risk of not identifying grateful patients with the means to make transformative gifts to your institution. Screening can take the onus of identification off of time-and resource-strapped clinicians, and empower the foundation staff to be more active participants in the fundraising process.

Is it legal for your organization to wealth screen patients?

Yes, it is absolutely legal for your organization to screen patient data points as defined in the HIPAA Final Ruling. The following is taken from the Association of Healthcare Philanthropy's Fundraising Under HIPAA Guide (revised, August 2016):

> *HIPAA allows health care organizations and their related foundations to use patient demographic information, health insurance status, dates of service, department of service information, treating physician information and outcome information for fundraising operations ("permitted patient information"), which includes normal fundraising activities such as the use of third-party vendors for direct mail or wealth screening services. Using "look-up" or "matching" databases or services for address verification or wealth screening is allowed under HIPAA as long as only permitted patient information is disclosed or used in the process, and the fundraising organization and any third-party vendor involved are in HIPAA compliance regarding safeguarding the patient information.*

It is critical that an institution's information technology, information security, and compliance departments are involved in implementing any screening process. Most reputable screening vendors should be capable of walking foundations through the process to ensure HIPAA compliance and best practices in data security.

What are others in the healthcare philanthropy industry doing around wealth screening patients?

Wealth screening patient data is a well-established and accepted practice within the healthcare philanthropy field. According to the Association of Healthcare Philanthropy's publication, Ethical Issues and Recommendations in Grateful Patient Fundraising and Philanthropy (published January 2019), wealth screening is "routinely used by 97 percent of health care institutions to identify potential donors." The FY2020 Association of American Medical Colleges Annual Development Survey Report noted that, of the 50+ reporting institutions that perform grateful patient fundraising, all of them had access and permission to screen both inpatient and outpatient populations. Of those, more than half screened patients daily, while the remainder screened patient data weekly, monthly, or at an undefined cadence.

What are the next steps for an institution considering deploying a patient screening process?

1. Begin discussions with key stakeholders within the foundation, information technology, information security, and compliance.
2. Ensure that your organization is abiding by HIPAA opt-out best practices, and that your foundation has the ability to track such opt-outs and remove those patients from the screening and prospect development process.
3. Begin educating frontline staff (and related support staff) on the merits of wealth screening and how it can positively impact their fundraising work.
4. When appropriate, further educate clinicians regarding the basics of wealth screening, and how it can help to identify high capacity grateful patients.
5. Develop a robust, metrics-based process to track high-capacity patients that have been identified, and expectations on how they should be approached by fundraising staff at all levels.

For more information on the Benefits of Wealth Screening Patient Populations, please feel free to contact:

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