

METHOD, SYSTEM, AND APPARATUS FOR PATIENT CONTROLLED ACCESS OF MEDICAL RECORDS

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of information administration and, more particularly, to user-specific information services.

2. Description of the Related Art

The storage and availability of different types of personal information is prompting increased privacy concerns. Users have a need to collect and store their personal information while also having ready access to the information. One of the manners in which information may be stored and retrieved more easily is through the use of electronic storage media. Users can store information such as bank records, medical records, credit card information, and the like on media. Unless the media is available to be accessed from different locations, however, the users must either carry the media with them or must permit access to the media from different locations. The latter situation results in concerns by the users that their personal information will not remain private and can be accessed without their permission.

This concern is especially true for medical records. Patient records need to be available for reference at their current doctors' offices, at any hospital where a patient is admitted or goes for outpatient treatment, and, for some limited purposes, at health insurance companies. At the current time, copies of private medical information are commonly scattered over different locations. In many of these instances, critical documents or images in hardcopies might even be lost, unavailable, or temporarily misplaced.

In all instances, doctors, hospitals, and health insurance employees all have to be trusted to have adequate computer and physical security over this medical information. Additionally, records may remain in the possession of particular doctors long after a patient has changed doctors and/or insurance companies, with no real need or incentive for those doctors or companies to provide access, maintain the confidentiality of this information, or ensure its security. The end result is that patients currently have no control over enabling and limiting access to their private medical information.

Currently, there is only limited physical security for many paper records at doctors' offices. For computer records, there are no guarantees, and limited regulatory requirements mandating that these records be kept secure from unauthorized personnel and/or hackers. Further, as many people have illnesses or conditions that they wish to remain private, this lack of security may result in exclusion from a job, affordable insurance, or embarrassing circumstances for these individuals should their private medical information become accessed by someone without the individual's permission.

Accordingly, it would be beneficial to provide a system and method that would permit a patient to access their own medical records. It would also be beneficial to provide a system and method that would permit a patient to control who could view their medical records as well as how such persons or entities would be able to view such information. It would also be beneficial to provide a system and method that would increase security over a patient's medical records consistent with local government regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act in the United States.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method, system, and apparatus for permitting a patient to have controlled access to

their medical records. More specifically, the present invention is capable of permitting a patient to access their own medical records from any location such that they are available even if the patient is away from their home. The present invention would also be capable of increasing the level of security a patient had over their medical records and enabling a patient to control those persons with whom access was granted to view these records.

In general, the present invention provides a method of permitting controlled access to medical records wherein a repository or storage server is first established. The repository would include each patient's records and would store them using a data storage device. The repository may be a central repository or a plurality of regional repositories. The repository may be connected to a network through a secure mechanism. As a result, any of a number of different persons and/or institutions may be granted access to the repository by the patient including, but not limited to, insurance companies, hospitals, research institutions, pharmacies, laboratories, and physicians. Authorization to access the repository may be through the use of a card and/or PIN for each of these persons and/or institutions, and some access may be limited in scope to only those records necessary for that particular person and/or institution.

In one embodiment, the present invention provides a method for permitting controlled access to medical records involving the steps of establishing a storage means for containing medical information, establishing a means for accessing the medical information, and controlling the means for accessing the medical information. Access to the medical information can be controlled according to a type or assigned role of the entity accessing the medical information, wherein access is limited according to the type or role of the entity.

In another embodiment, the present invention provides a machine-readable storage having stored thereon, a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of establishing a storage means for containing medical information, establishing a means for accessing the medical information, and controlling the means for accessing the medical information. Access to the medical information can be controlled according to a type or an assigned role of the entity accessing the medical information, wherein access is limited according to the type or role of the entity.

In yet another embodiment, the present invention provides a system for permitting controlled access to medical records including storage means for containing medical information, means for accessing the medical information, and means for controlling the means for accessing the medical information. Access to the medical information can be controlled according to a type or assigned role of the entity accessing the medical information, wherein access is limited according to the type or role of the entity.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

There are shown in the drawings, embodiments which are presently preferred, it being understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown.

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating one embodiment of a system for permitting controlled access to medical records in accordance with the inventive arrangements disclosed herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method, system, and apparatus for permitting controlled access to personal infor-