

Merge Enterprise Master Patient Index

EMPI – The Framework for “Meaningful Use”

A goal of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is to foster IT adoption and use within the healthcare industry. It provides justification (via incentives from the federal government) for healthcare enterprises to ensure “meaningful use” of certified electronic health record (EHR) systems by January, 2011.

The Current State of Patient Profile Information

In most cases, patient data is spread across multiple departments within the same enterprise. Each department may have its own electronic system (EMRs, EHRs, PACS, etc.) where patient information is captured. These electronic systems, while effective at storing information locally, cannot provide the interoperability necessary to promote “meaningful use”.

Often, departments will support these systems with imbedded enterprise master patient indexes (EMPIs). Imbedded EMPIs, while useful for promoting information sharing within single systems, also prevent healthcare enterprises from achieving “meaningful use”. They cannot support the sharing of information across departments - limiting departments to a “system-centric” view that forces clinicians to approach patients from a procedural, or process-driven standpoint.

How to Achieve “Meaningful Use”

These organizations can achieve “meaningful use” by proving they can safely, securely and beneficially exchange patient information stored within electronic healthcare systems. This promotes a view that extends beyond a single process or procedure to provide a “patient-centric” view that spans the continuum of care.

Eventually, these types of initiatives will promote information sharing without boundaries; ensuring patient information is accessible by the right people at the right time – regardless of location or affiliation. Before this can happen though, the initial groundwork must be laid.

It can't be stressed enough that the government-issued incentives noted above will address not only the acquisition of, but also the use of certified electronic health record systems - meaning it is extremely vital for healthcare enterprises to ensure patient profile information can not only be stored electronically, but also securely shared electronically as well.



The Benefits of Merge Enterprise Master Patient Index (EMPI)

This is where Merge enters the equation. Merge EMPI provides the basic framework to ensure “meaningful use” by facilitating the aggregation of patient information spread across disparate healthcare systems. Unlike imbedded EMPIs, it provides a fully interoperable EMPI that facilitates single point access to all patient information, enabling the safe and secure sharing of information across disparate systems.

Having the information needed to provide the best possible treatment to patients has always been a priority for all healthcare enterprises. Merge EMPI facilitates the “single source of the truth” today’s healthcare enterprises need to ensure this level of treatment.

Better Safe than Sorry

The concept of “meaningful use” is here to stay. Healthcare organizations hesitant to adopt these standards will be left out in the cold. The ultimate goal of these compliance standards and initiatives (Meaningful Use, Health Information Exchange Initiatives, etc.) is to eventually get to a point where the sharing of healthcare information knows no bounds. This “transparency of information” would have far-reaching benefits for the entire healthcare industry - enabling the industry to provide improved care at a lower cost that will increase the overall health of the population.

Facilitating enterprise-wide information sharing via a fully interoperable EMPI is a vital step in the process.



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Merge Healthcare develops software solutions that automate healthcare data and diagnostic workflow to create a more comprehensive electronic record of the patient experience. Merge products, ranging from standards-based development toolkits to fully integrated clinical applications, have been used by healthcare providers worldwide for more than 20 years.