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12//14/11

SE 4930

Security Dilemma: HealthCare Clinicians at Work

Website: http://www.computer.org/portal/web/security/home

Nov/Dec 2011

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Security is huge concern in the medical field. Patient forms and other information are considered to be highly confidential, and access to these documents is supposed to be restricted. However, what is a good security practice and what is a good Medical facility practice are two different things. Medical practitioners need fast access to documents so they can perform quick decisions. There are many security practices in which nurses are required to scan barcodes to check which medications the patient is supposed to receive, but when hospitals become busy, these methods are thrown out for more efficient ways.

This article covers an attempt to implement a better authorization system, which, in theory, would allow medical records to be more secured but still allow sufficient access to medical practitioners. The current system used at the hospital involved the user inputting a password in each application they attempted to use. However, this took time, so many would just leave the computer up so that all users would have fast access to this, circumventing the point of the security. Nurses would also leave movable computers logged in for quick access, and even walk away for them. Their argument was that it would be too hard to log out continuously, or that the data would be hard for anyone to read that didn't understand the computer. This is obviously a reasonable security risk, as anyone could walk up to the computer and gain access to very confidential information.

The new system called for authentication for a network log in, and this log in would allow the user to access all applications and information the user had access to, as opposed to remembering a password for each application. The implementer believed this would be a simpler system, while allowing for ease of use and more secure access to sensitive information. However, after a test implementation, a lot was learned about the reality of security in a medical situation versus how it "should work". During the test run, they found that users needed much more quick access and also they needed a quick log out, as logging out would take time away from them as they needed to constantly log in and out. Also, a huge problem with the implementation turned out to be the users insecurities with new software, creating more problems in the actually implementation then the software would have itself, as many question the uncertainty and the ambiguity of new security.

I learned from this study that while everything looks great on paper and implementing a new system should seem simple, that however, the things people are used to and the insecurities they have with change greatly affect the ability to implement new software changes that affect people.