

Secure messaging for dental practices

This whitepaper will detail why email encryption has become a must have tool for dental practices. In addition to HIPAA and Omnibus Rule compliance, it also delivers unexpected bonus benefits in helping dental practices improve patient experiences, increase employee productivity and reduce business expenses.



Introduction

Dental practices are among the fastest growing adopters of cloud email encryption because of the need to comply with HIPAA and the Omnibus Final Rule. However, where email encryption has even greater impact for dental practices is when it becomes a core communication tool that encompasses secure email, data loss prevention, large file transfer, mobile messaging, web forms and e-statements. The result is a differentiated dental practice that delivers a superior patient experience, has more productive employees, lower business expenses, and less security risk.



The Impact of the HIPAA Omnibus Final Rule on Dental Practices

By now, every dental practice should be aware that HIPAA makes dental practices responsible for protected health information (PHI) and must implement safeguards to ensure the security of PHI. However, many dental practices have not yet become fully aware that the HIPAA Omnibus Final Rule update also impacts their practice. These are three Omnibus Rule changes that make email encryption essential for compliance in dental practices:

Change #1: Individual patient rights have been expanded to include the ability to ask for a copy of records (including dental records) in an electronic form.

Impact: Secure messaging enables dental practices to meet this requirement by providing records via secure email directly into a patient's customary inbox. Patients prefer to receive electronic dental records via email so dental practices should try to meet this preference in order to make the process as simple as possible for patients.

Change #2: Breaches of limited data sets, even if they do not contain any birthdates or zip codes, now must be handled like all other breaches of PHI.

Impact: Expanding the types of incidents that must be reported as a breach increases the risk that dental practices face in terms of potential compliance penalties, legal fees, business disruption and negative press coverage. The onus is on dental practices to invest more in security such as secure messaging to minimize the risk of any breaches from occurring, even those of limited data sets. Financial penalties have also been increased to as much as \$1.5 million per violation.

Change #3: However, if a dental practice can demonstrate a low probability that the PHI has been compromised, then breach notification is not necessary. The following four factor risk assessment must be applied to establish the low probability of PHI being compromised:

1. The nature and extent of the PHI involved, including the types of identifiers and the likelihood of re-identification.
2. The unauthorized person who used the PHI or to whom the disclosure was made.
3. Whether the PHI was actually acquired or viewed.
4. The extent to which the risk to the PHI has been mitigated.

Impact: This rule change provides a strong incentive to dental practices to use secure messaging because it can play a critical role in establishing the low probability of PHI being compromised. Value-added features such as real-time tracking, message recall, Forward/Reply Freeze and For Your Eyes Only (F.Y.E.O) password protection can save a dental practice from having to report a breach. Therefore, proactive investment in secure messaging is a must.



The Bonus Benefits of Secure Messaging For Dental Practices

While secure messaging is essential for HIPAA security and compliance, it is also a 'must have' solution because it can differentiate your practice from the competition in these areas:

Improved Patient Experiences

Given how vital reputation and word of mouth marketing is to dental practices, secure messaging can enable your practice to stand out by making communication easier and by making processes more efficient for patients.

- Instead of having to call, email or fax PHI or sensitive information, patients can securely email you from their customary inbox, their phone, tablet or from any web browser.
- Instead of having to fill out paper forms in the office or print out paper forms prior to an appointment, patients can now fill out a secure web form on your Web site prior to the visit or from your office.
- Instead of giving handwritten prescriptions to patients that they have to take to a pharmacist, your practice can easily email the prescription to a pharmacy for the patient to speed up processing.
- With all secure messages, patients can be given access to real-time tracking so they don't have to wonder if their email was received and always know when further actions are taken. That is transparent communication that very few dental practices offer.

Improved Employee Productivity

Secure Messaging can also help dental practices take a large step towards reducing their dependence on inefficient paper-based processes.

- Employees no longer have to spend time faxing or snail mailing dental records, invoices, prescriptions, and other patient information to patients, other providers, pharmacies and insurance companies. Sending a secure email is much faster and also more secure.
- Employees no longer have to perform data entry on difficult-to-read hand written patient forms. Secure web forms captures the information electronically.
- Real-time tracking in secure messaging lets employees know when action has been taken on a secure message so they don't have to wonder if its been read or received. For example, an employee can send an appointment or payment reminder to a patient and know exactly when the patient has viewed the message.
- Large files such as dental x-rays and scans can be emailed easily along with a secure message. External recipients can also be given large file capability to send large files back.
- Employees can send and receive secure messages from any mobile and tablet device or from any web browser so secure messaging is available from any device and location.
- Recurring e-statements or e-invoices can also be sent out automatically according to business rules.

Reduced Business Expenses

This benefit may be the biggest surprise. Secure Messaging actually can deliver ROI. It can pay for itself because dental practices will be able to reduce other business expenses. There is no cost or limit to inviting external guest users, which allows secure messaging to become a central communication tool. Examples of business expenses that can be reduced includes:

- Postage and parcel
- Fax line and fax machines
- Paper shredding or storage
- SMS or Voice services used for automated appointment reminders



Why Secure Messaging has become the solution of choice for dental practices

Legacy encryption solutions have a well earned reputation for being difficult-to-use and deploy or offering little value beyond commoditized encryption. That's why historically, many dental practices chose not to adopt encryption. Secure Messaging is being adopted rapidly by dental practices because not only is it remarkably easy-to-use and deploy, it also provides a patented set of rich user level features that delivers broad value beyond compliance.



Simple to use: Secure Messaging requires no training to learn, and integrates with your existing email whether you are using Microsoft Outlook or Office 365 or whether you or your customers are using Gmail, Yahoo or Outlook.com.



Easy to deploy in the cloud: IT staff is not needed to implement Secure Messaging because it is 100% cloud-based with no hardware to install. It deploys in minutes, and there is no ongoing IT management required.



Enhanced security options: Secure also provides a unique array of patented security options that gives greater control and privacy such as data loss prevention, true message recall, For Your Eyes Only (F.Y.E.O.) password protection and Forward/Reply Freeze.



Flexible access: Every customer's employees and patients have multiple ways to access secure messaging including a secure Web portal branded to your dental practice, email plugins also branded to your practice, mobile and tablet apps, desktop clients and browser extensions.



Rich features: Secure Messaging is highlighted by the patented Delivery Slip, a unique window attached to every message that displays real-time tracking of all message activity as well as providing access to enhanced security options and large file transfer. Secure web forms and e-statements are also optional features available to customers.

Conclusion

Dental practices initially adopt email encryption to comply with HIPAA and the Omnibus Final Rule. However, practices that adopt Secure Messaging are discovering that secure messaging can have a much broader impact by improving patient experiences, employee productivity and lowering business costs. The result is a secure, patient friendly and efficient dental practice differentiated from the competition. Secure is so easy to deploy in the cloud that your practice can benefit in minutes.