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Americans prefer digital medical records, survey shows

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WASHINGTON – A new national survey shows U.S. adults believe in the benefits of an electronic medical record and would prefer to deal with physicians and insurance companies that use digital records rather than those who do not.

The survey was released here today at the Health IT: Unlocking the Potential summit. Healthcare giant Kaiser Permanente commissioned the telephone survey, which was conducted by StrategyOne, an independent research firm. StrategyOne gathered information from 1,000 consumers, 18 or older, using random dialing.

American adults favor providers (51% over 17%) and insurance carriers (68% over 16%) who use electronic medical records over those who do not.

It confirms what past surveys have found that large numbers of Americans are seeking health information online through Web sites such as Web MD, Revolution Health, Healia, Google and others. It also shows that those online searches are increasingly focusing on the location and management of personal health information. And while 12 percent of Americans currently review their personal medical records on their health insurance company's Web site, more than half say they would like to be able to check claims and coverage or access personal records electronically in the future.

"It is clear that Americans are ready to enter a digital healthcare age," said [George Halvorson](#), chairman and CEO of [Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc.](#)

Seventy-two percent of American adults view a computer system as more efficient than a paper system when it comes to managing medical records.

There is still some ambiguity about the security of electronic medical records compared with paper records, the survey revealed.

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“Health care legislation and regulation focus on many privacy concerns without providing guidance on minimum acceptable levels of security,” said [Bill Conner](#) in his talk at the summit.

[Conner](#) is president and CEO of Entrust, a digital security firm.

“Because patients are becoming more discriminate with their healthcare choices, organizations need to understand that both policy combined with adequate security is the key to unlock the benefits of a trusted ecosystem and an organization's brand.”

The survey showed that 73 percent of Americans believe the benefits of electronic records, such as better care in emergencies and reduction in medical errors, outweigh any potential privacy risks.

While interest in this technology is clearly high, not enough information is being shared with patients about its value to their own healthcare, consumers report. Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed did not recall seeing, hearing or reading about electronic records before being surveyed.

[Myrl Weinberg](#), president of the [National Health Council](#), said patient awareness of the benefits of electronic medical and health records “will be the key to wider adoption.” “The more familiar patients get with this technology, the more they will see its relevance to their own lives.”

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