

# Increasing flow of information has impact on patient consent

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(HealthDay)—The increasing flow of information as part of health information exchanges raises certain issues for patient consent, according to an article published July 8 in *Medical Economics*.

Noting that physicians, hospitals, and [health systems](#) are increasingly sharing patient data, the author of the article, Ken Terry, discusses implications for patient consent.

Patients are already asked to sign Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act forms, allowing treating providers to exchange information about patients they have in common. In addition, patients

may have to give specific consent for information to be exchanged through health information exchanges, with states choosing to have "opt-in" or "opt-out" policies. However, Terry writes that with an opt-in requirement, many patients won't bother to opt-in, although education could help encourage them to do so. A further concern is how physicians will remember which patients have opted in when they transmit information to a [health information exchange](#). Federal and state laws require that sensitive data be segregated before records are exchanged, but in certain cases, [electronic health records](#) have difficulty segregating this information. From a legal standpoint, it is simpler to ask patients to allow all of their records to be exchanged.

According to Terry, health care attorney David Harlow believes that, over time, consumers will appreciate the improvements in [health care](#) that will result from the increased flow of information: "In the long run, it will be a good thing, and it could reduce the duplication of diagnostics and get the right care to patients sooner."

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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