

## Re: Would patients like to be able to email their doctors?

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.med/2004-12/2236.html>

---

*From:* David Rind ([drind\\_at\\_caregroup.harvard.edu](mailto:drind_at_caregroup.harvard.edu))

*Date:* 12/21/04

Date: Mon, 20 Dec 2004 19:14:08 -0500

Happy Dog wrote:

> "David Wright" <[wright@clam.prodigy.net](mailto:wright@clam.prodigy.net)> wrote in message

>

>>Matt Beckwith M.D. <[beckwith@wchsys.org](mailto:beckwith@wchsys.org)> wrote:

>>

>>>>I'm going to assume that was directed at me, even though you didn't

>>>>have the courtesy to include the text to which you were responding.

>>>>

>>>>What's the matter, did your mommy not breast feed you or something?

>>>>

>>>>Thanks -- I figured you were just a blowhard with no actual experience

>>>>with computer security. I appreciate your confirmation. You're a

>>>>sport.

>>>>

>>>>

>>>>The topic interests me because my medical records are scattered over a half

>>>>dozen government offices.. Be nice if you could get an intelligent response.

>>>>

>>>>moo

There's actually quite a lot of published literature about this topic.

It's fairly complex more because of issues of balancing access and confidentiality than dealing with issues of security.

That is, you can almost certainly make an electronic record system at least as secure as a paper system (and people already find it easier to breach the security of paper records by getting the information from people who have appropriate access to the records than by actually stealing the records; the same would be true for a secure electronic system).

What is typically more difficult is figuring out how to give access when it is needed for care. If, for instance, you allow the patient to decide who does and does not have access (for instance by making the patient the keeper of a private key), what do you do in an emergency when the patient is incapable of participating in the decision about whether to

sci.med: Re: Would patients like to be able to email their doctors?

release records.

As mentioned, there are lots of published articles about this. Search Medline for articles with Kohane IS and Szolovits P as authors for some citations.

--

David Rind  
drind@caregroup.harvard.edu