

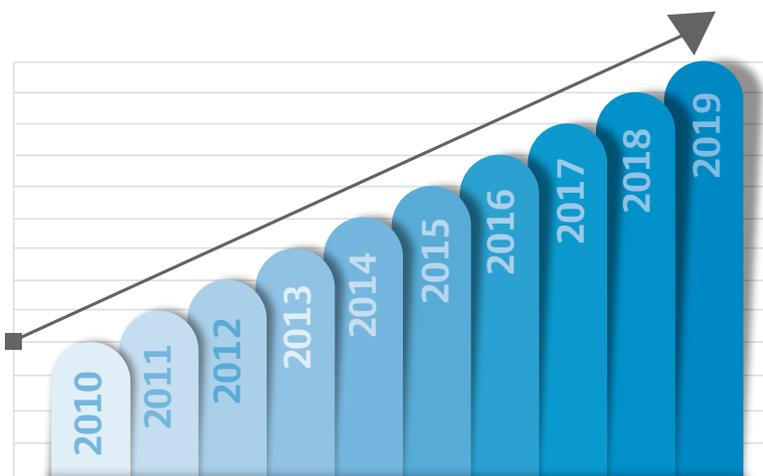
# How Security at Healthcare Facilities will be impacted by Changing Healthcare Reform

The Affordable Care Act is one of the most discussed topics across the country and is having a powerful impact on the healthcare industry. The ACA is the biggest reform of the U.S. healthcare system (since Medicare was introduced), raising revenues with new taxes, reduces and shifts spending under Medicare, subsidizes private insurance coverage, expands opportunities for public insurance, and requires that most U.S. residents obtain health insurance coverage.

By Lee Cloney, CHPA, CPP and Paul White, CHPA, CHSP, HEM

As different components of healthcare reform are implemented, there are already impacts being felt from the rural physician's office to critical access hospitals, to major healthcare systems. Early statistics can only give some frame of reference for how the Affordable Care Act is affecting healthcare operations, as projecting the total impact of such a comprehensive reform is complicated.

- One of the primary goals of the ACA is to provide coverage to 23 million uninsured and underinsured Americans by the year 2016 with healthcare plans that provide coverage for specific minimum health benefits, like emergency services. <sup>i</sup>
- The Cleveland Clinic reduced its budget by \$300 million for 2014, arguing that the Affordable Care Act required drastic financial changes. As part of that program, 3,000 employees were offered buyouts. <sup>ii</sup>
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) project that healthcare costs are expected to grow by 6.6 % each year between 2010 and 2019 as a result of ACA implementation. <sup>iii</sup>
- The ACA is reliant on savings already required under previous law in order to maintain solvency of the Medical Hospital Insurance Trust Fund. Even with these savings, the total new spending for the ACA far exceeds cost-saving provisions. <sup>iv</sup>



**Health care costs expected to grow by 6.6% each year**

## Influence on The Security Industry

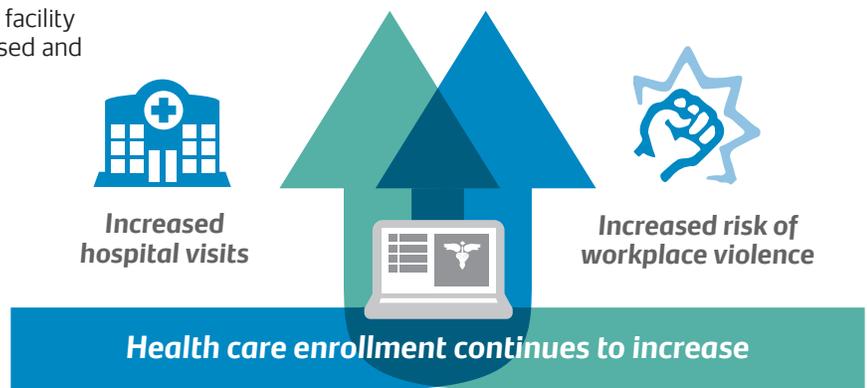
Whether security is an in-house expense or contracted out privately, security at healthcare facilities is a critical factor in day-to-day operations and management. As an industry, security's ability to help prevent and mitigate safety and security concerns as efficiently as possible will be vital throughout and after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

### Risks in Healthcare

Healthcare facilities are encountering challenges from numerous sources with security at the forefront. Facilities require security based on incident rates and risk levels. With most facilities staying open 24/7 and the majority of visitors experiencing high levels of stress, security concerns are paramount. Violence, wandering patients, theft of hospital assets, supplies and medications, and the risk of abductions fall onto the spectrum of hospital security concerns. Security managers must tackle dual priorities in order to encourage an unrestricted environment for visitors, patients and staff while helping reduce or eliminate risks and threats. Other areas of the facility must be managed with access control so that only authorized providers have access to restricted areas.

Tools used to monitor security issues in a healthcare facility can be expensive and time-consuming when purchased and managed separately, such as:

- Patient management tools
- Panic alarms
- Video surveillance
- Visitor management protocols
- Emergency communication
- Intrusion detection technology



When rolled into a comprehensive security package that determines a strategy for the best tools at the most appropriate locations, hospitals can achieve optimum efficiency with a security plan that integrates technology.

Today, many healthcare facilities manage a flow of patients and visitors in and out of their doors on a daily basis. Patient volume, particularly in the emergency room, is expected to skyrocket. Newly-enrolled Medicaid patients in Oregon, for example, were 40% more likely to use the emergency room than uninsured patients, and this impact is likely to be felt across the country.<sup>v</sup> This study from the National Bureau of Economic Research indicates that insured patients are much more likely to take advantage of services, especially emergency care.<sup>vi</sup>

Although enrollments in healthcare plans have increased, they still haven't met the anticipated target levels. This means that even more individuals will continue to enroll in plans over time. Healthcare providers are already overwhelmed with traffic in many areas, and the amount of patients entering emergency rooms is only projected to increase. With increased traffic comes concerns about workplace violence. In recent years:

- 8-10% of surveyed emergency room nurses reported experience with physical and verbal abuse on the job.
- An additional 42-45.7% of surveyed emergency room nurses reported experience with just verbal abuse.<sup>vii</sup>

Hospitals have increased pressure to reduce operational costs at the management level and from the government as a result of increased Medicare and Medicaid costs. All hospitals are looking for cost-saving measures, and security costs are always a vulnerable target when it comes time to reduce the budget. This drives the need for better efficiency as fewer security staff must be equipped to handle more people and property.

Healthcare facilities must have a laser focus on efficiency. Those with emergency departments have already started programs to handle overcrowding, such as different intake procedures

determined by the severity of care required, more efficient bed space usage, and reduced admission rates.<sup>viii</sup> Security has the potential to be an important partner for healthcare providers in this uniquely challenging time through innovative service delivery and a continued strive for efficiency.

Not all hospitals have security and more may be considering adding to existing security services due to the increased patient volume. Those that already have security likely want to keep the services but reduce the costs. The industry must be prepared to demonstrate the value of their security provided while remaining sensitive to budgetary concerns. Many healthcare facilities are not just focused on cost-cutting measures but on survival period. While larger hospitals are zeroing in on efficiency measures, reductions in staff and costs across the board, some smaller hospitals or healthcare providers are merging or just being absorbed by the larger systems.

These additional challenges mean that security officers are handling more tasks than ever – from releasing bodies from the morgue to delivering vital lab work and equipment to different departments. This is because hospital leadership is changing how care is provided. Some hospitals are filling the needs gap by hiring nurse practitioners and physician assistants who are able to handle tasks previously done by physicians, like writing prescriptions, ordering lab tests, and examining patients.<sup>ix</sup> As a result, nurses have less time to handle other tasks, some of which are thus being passed off to security when appropriate. This requires improved efficiency, management of resources, and specialized training.

Finally, the increased activity in healthcare facilities, especially those where staff have been reduced and providers are overworked, could lead to increased wait times for patients and their families. This could impact patient satisfaction scores, which are used by the CMS to increase or decrease the reimbursement rate for care at that facility. Security will have an increasingly important role in improving the patient experience at the healthcare facility when it comes to wait times.

## Security Industry Response

In order to perform as efficiently as possible, security must be prepared to have targeted approaches at the local level. Data points must be analyzed in order to make the most of security personnel. Determining when and where officers should be placed is an important component of meeting the need while optimizing efficiency. Officers should be aware of the times and place at which security needs are most likely to arise, making staff on hand a concern during those periods. During slower periods, concepts like remote guarding may help to bridge the gap.

“We need to make do with less as we see patient censuses increase.” Lee Cloney, Region Director of Training and Development – Healthcare Division at Securitas USA.

A primary component of this adaptation will require identification and strategy on behalf of security companies and managers. Potential risks must be identified through data analysis and the response must include exploration of possible recommendations augmented by the use of security tools. Officers will need to focus on being more proactive when appropriate to maximize their time while meeting client needs. Using video surveillance and remote guarding tools that do the work of alerting personnel to developing problems reduces part of the need for patrols and numerous staff on duty at all times. Analytics that inform security managers and employees about the needs of the facility will be at the crux of personalized strategies.

Security companies must be prepared to leverage technology as a method of reducing costs while still meeting security needs. Remote guarding concepts, including cameras, will allow officers to respond more quickly to escalating issues and reduce the need for as many on-site patrol officers. Technology can be used to identify non-productive uses of officer time. When technology is used properly, the client can realize improved service with a smaller and more efficient, trained security team.

Furthermore, officers should strive to be pro-active when appropriate. While the ACA focuses on the treatment, security and providers must focus on analyzing whether there are changes in the risk levels, stepping in to assist where needed. Action plans and control are essential for taking the unique needs of each facility into account when planning a comprehensive strategy. This could include calling in internal healthcare consultants to improve efficiency and generate new and unique ideas to meet client needs and improve efficiency at the same time.

At the management level, hospitals will seek expert healthcare facility security advice, highlighting the need for managers to operate as a team to identify problems and cooperatively generate efficient and effective solutions.



**The industry must be prepared to demonstrate the value of their security provisions while remaining sensitive to budget concerns.**

Finally, security officers will benefit from more targeted training that provides them with the tools to respond to the wide variety of issues they may see on-site. Training in customer service skills, for example, provides training on how to help reduce tension. An officer should be able to identify the cause of patient behavior, whether it is a reaction to frustration or an escalating threat. With longer wait times due to limited healthcare staff and an influx of patients, security must be prepared to manage potential issues with physical skills if necessary, verbal de-escalation techniques, and customer service practices. The security officer must be armed with an improved understanding of the patient experiences in order to formulate mitigation strategies.

The full impact of Affordable Care Act implementation is not yet known, but it is highly likely that healthcare facilities and providers will continue to face challenges and constraints in their daily operations and at the management level. The environment of healthcare risks will remain the same in that the potential of violence will not be reduced. Patient and visitor traffic at hospitals will increase while clients will expect security costs to be reduced. Security must be prepared to review, analyze, and improve security systems in the most efficient way possible, providing the same level of customer service that clients have come to expect and need in healthcare facilities.



**Officers will need to focus on being more proactive when appropriate to maximize their time while meeting client needs.**

Improving customer service and conflict mitigation skills for security officers, increasing usage of technology and video analytics, and tracking incidents to identify trends for proactive strategic responses are all ways that the security industry must be prepared to respond to the challenges in today's healthcare facilities.

### **Conclusion**

The singularly unique set of circumstances resulting from the Affordable Care Act, specifically increasing volumes of patients combined with decreasing reimbursement, offers the security industry an opportunity to be proactive in partnering with healthcare providers. Service industries such as healthcare and security will not know the full impact of the ACA for some time. This presents an opportunity to offer solutions for improving safety and security through innovative ideas, effective training and the use of technology.

A successful security provider must be knowledgeable, professional and flexible in planning and providing security services. In this challenging time, healthcare facilities must see the value in creating strategic options to meet their security needs.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.healthcare.gov/what-does-marketplace-health-insurance-cover/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/hospital-of-tomorrow/articles/2013/09/20/is-obamacare-to-blame-for-hospital-layoffs-is-obamacare-to-blame-for-hospital-layoffs>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://economics.mit.edu/files/6829>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://mercatus.org/publication/fiscal-consequences-affordable-care-act/summary-fiscal-consequences-affordable-care-act>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/obamacare-hurt-doctors-article-1.1581220>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/01/02/obamacare-has-a-new-problem-it-won-t-fix-emergency-rooms.html>

<sup>vii</sup> Emergency Department Violence Surveillance Survey, Emergency Nurses Association, 2011.

<sup>viii</sup> [http://www.healthcapital.com/hcc/newsletter/1\\_11/aca.pdf](http://www.healthcapital.com/hcc/newsletter/1_11/aca.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> [http://articles.mcall.com/2013-08-10/news/mc-obamacare-physicians-demand-20130810\\_1\\_family-physicians-primary-care-obamacare](http://articles.mcall.com/2013-08-10/news/mc-obamacare-physicians-demand-20130810_1_family-physicians-primary-care-obamacare)

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Lee has worked as a director of training supporting healthcare facilities for the past 11 years. He specializes in workplace violence and aggressive behavior training, emphasizing the importance of healthcare facility security. As a member of ASIS International and IAHS (International Association for Healthcare Security & Safety), Lee is certified healthcare protection administrator, and is a true expert in the field of healthcare facility security and training.

Paul White



Paul has spent the last 12 years in the healthcare security sector through various functions. He currently serves as Vice President, Securitas USA Healthcare Division. His years of consulting experience for risk management and environmental risk has positioned him as a trusted subject matter expert. Paul has amassed many certifications in the healthcare field such as Certified Healthcare Security and Certified Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Professional. He currently serves on the Board for IAHS and is a member of ASIS International.

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