**Mobile Privacy and mHealth Security in 2016**

The year 2016 was a year of awareness and focus on information security in the healthcare industry, particularly in mHealth security – which included secure messaging and mobile app security.

Business associates and covered entities look for technologies that result in productive and manageable workflow while keeping Protected Health Information (PHI) secure at the same time. As mobile usage is increasing and mobile apps are proving beneficial for healthcare, security concerns related to mHealth cannot be overseen and need to be considered especially when PHI is stored.

2015 showed how overlooking mHealth security could lead to a number of issues such as financial fines and OCR HIPAA settlements. 2016, however, witnessed many healthcare providers successfully being able to provide mHealth options along with ensuring data security.

Here are some key highlights from 2016 which show how stakeholders in the healthcare industry have devised ways to make use of technology while ensure PHI security.

* In early 2016, Congress called the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to make efforts to clarify HIPAA security regulations in regards to mHealth apps development and usage. According to their explanation, mHealth apps can bring a great deal of advancement in healthcare, but the ambiguous security laws attached to them make providers hesitant in incorporating them.
* Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) laid stress that application developers need to be aware of and be able to incorporate mobile application security when developing mobile health apps. The ONC, in collaboration with Federal Trade Commission (FTC), HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) created an online informative tool for this purpose. ONC also stressed that mobile app developers need to be fully knowledgeable of HIPAA regulations.
* The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare (JCAHO) had been in a debate on whether it should allow secure texting on the orders of physician or not. In a newsletter published in May 2016, it declared that it had uplifted its ban on secure texting options in healthcare. However, in December 2016, it reversed this decision.