Reflective activity - Ethics in Computing  
  
  
Read Stahl et al (2016) and Bott (2018) Chapter 1.

In today’s data-driven economy, organisations rely heavily on data to make business choices, marketing moves, and strategic decisions to outperform their competitors. As a Data Analyst working for a large hospital, my role involved analysing patient health-related data to enable the hospital to provide the service needed to the public today and expand the service required for the future based on the trends resulting from my analysis. More details such as age group, location, gender, health issues, etc., in the reports will help the hospital perform better today and in the future.

In the Stahl et al. (2016) paper, the authors state that “many of the authors involved in researching the ethics of computing remain wedded to their disciplinary traditions and fail to provide actionable advice to relevant stakeholders.” This assessment aims to consider me as a pertinent stakeholder working as a Data Analyst working for a large hospital and study the potential ethical issues and possible actions, I can take to address those.

A data analyst working with the patent’s health-related data may potentially result in the following critical ethical concerns.

* Collecting unnecessary patient’s personal data to provide the service.
* Insufficient data security measures on the data collected; and
* Using the data collected for a different purpose than intended initially, without sufficient and explicit consent from the patient.

Collecting unnecessary patient personal data: Even though various regulations require collecting only the necessary information to provide the service, health service providers are still gathering the data which are not essential to provide their service. Varsha and Achuta argue that collecting unnecessary data is not only illegal but also unethical (Chiruvella and Guddati, 2021). However, by educating the organisation’s management about their legal and ethical obligations, collecting unnecessary data can be minimised. In addition, organisation awareness by conducting annual training about moral obligations can improve organisations’ ethical posture.

Insufficient data security measures: Sufficient security around the data collected is mandatory in most countries. However, organisations handle security as a compliance expectation than an ethical obligation. Deven and Kenneth claim that having robust security on the data collected from the customers is a moral obligation rather than a regulatory requirement (McGraw and Mandl, 2021). Working with appropriate technical leaders and senior management to ensure necessary security measures are implemented to protect the patient data is a critical step. In addition, on an ongoing basis, the organisation should perform a risk assessment to ensure that the necessary risks are addressed, including data security. Standards like PCI expect organisations to scan the environment to identify sensitive data like credit card data so that the environment can be protected accordingly.

Using the data collected for a different purpose than intended initially: Health-related information is more valuable than ever before, specifically recently. As a result, organisations are willing to pay to obtain the data for various marketing and product development. Furthermore, health service providers share the information with third parties for financial and market gain, which is illegal and unethical in many parts of the world, argues Wanbil and the team (Lee, Zankl and Chang, 2016). In addition, numerous cases were exposed worldwide where organisations misused the data collected from patients.

**References:**

Chiruvella, V. and Guddati, A.K. (2021) Ethical Issues in Patient Data Ownership. *Interactive Journal of Medical Research*, 10(2), p.e22269.

Lee, W., Zankl, W. and Chang, H. (2016) *An Ethical Approach to Data Privacy Protection*. [online] www.isaca.org. Available at: https://www.isaca.org/resources/isaca-journal/issues/2016/volume-6/an-ethical-approach-to-data-privacy-protection.

McGraw, D. and Mandl, K.D. (2021) Privacy protections to encourage use of health-relevant digital data in a learning health system. *npj Digital Medicine*, 4(1).