The Ascension and Google partnership represents a legally permissible but ethically complex use of health data in software driven environments. The conflict arises from a mismatch between legal compliance (HIPAA) and public expectation of privacy and transparency especially when the software partner is a company with a controversial privacy track record like Google.

From a software development ethics perspective, the issue centers on informed consent, data governance, and accountability in algorithmic systems that handle sensitive personal data.

the conflict was preventable, but not necessarily intentionally caused. Ascension and Google appear to have acted within HIPAA’s legal bounds, but they underestimated the cultural and ethical expectations tied to patient trust.

**Key ethical oversights include:**

* Not informing patients about the nature and scope of data sharing.
* Choosing a partner (Google) with public baggage around data misuse.
* Lack of public-facing controls or opt-out options for patients.
* These were foreseeable points of contention, especially when dealing with personally identifiable health information.

**Ways to Resolve or Mitigate the Conflict**

* Transparent Communication and Consent

Introduce a patient notification system when data is shared with external vendors even if legally exempt from obtaining consent.

Use user-facing dashboards (via patient portals) that show what entities have access to their data and for what purposes.

* Ethical Software Development Practices

Implement data minimization principles in the backend systems ensuring that even de-identified data is tightly scoped to specific use cases.

Apply audit logging and access transparency tools that can track every data access event by the software or Google personnel.

* Establish a Third-Party Ethics Board

Like an IRB (Institutional Review Board), this would review and approve all major data-sharing agreements for fairness, necessity, and risk.

* Reevaluate Vendor Agreements

Require vendors to explicitly agree to no secondary use or monetization of the data, beyond the specific software services agreed upon.