

The use of CCTV in Hospitals

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Introduction

We all know that hospital is a place where people go to cure or recover from illnesses. Patients are vulnerable because they are usually in a weakened state. It is difficult to imagine that these facilities would be targeted, but the fact is that they are. So many times, we have been hearing stories about kidnapping babies, stolen laptops or electronic devices containing sensitive information about patients or sometimes even serious crimes such as shootings within the hospital environment. Because of these very serious crimes, there is the need for comprehensive security to keep medical professionals/staff and patients safe. (SecurityKamExperts, 2014)

CCTV cameras in hospitals and GP practices can be useful in helping to deter or monitor crime in public areas, but it is important to understand the confidentiality implications of having a surveillance system in place, as well as the legal obligations. (MDU, 2018)

There can be serious challenges in hospitals without the use of CCTV. In some cases, there are violent patients with high security risks, and some are doing drugs. They either take drugs or sell them in any opportunity available to them and they sometimes use hospitals waiting rooms to do their dubious games. As a security guard myself, we have chased drug dealers so many times from a hospital car park.

If you think staff member is stealing or if there is any quarrel, fight between staff members, the only way to get credible facts or evidence in circumstances like that, is through use of CCTV.

The benefits of the use CCTV in hospitals are huge by reducing crime and increasing safety in hospital environment but we must also take into consideration the responsibilities that comes with it.

Rationale

CCTV is very useful in hospitals as it helps prevent crime.

Objectives

The use of CCTV in hospitals

Methodology

I have used search engines like Google search, Google Scholar, articles, and personal reflection to write this report.

Secondar Data Analysis

Following news sources and evaluating information gathered from research and personal experience.

Discussion

There are many issues when talking about safety. In most hospitals that I have visited, visitors are required to check in before entering hospital premises to prevent possible trespassers or those who may want to commit crimes. It is vital that these check-in procedures are meant to keep both staff and patients safe and to also protect the privacy of patient health information. Ensuring that patients are protected from abusive staff, also protecting members of staff from aggressive patients from any possible attack.

Both members of staff and patients can benefit from CCTV because it helps bring a sense of safety or security for all. CCTV act as additional eyes watching everything that is happening in and out of the hospital. By monitoring screens can help to see if patient is distressed or needs urgent intervention before is too late. The security cameras can also detect suspicious activity or those who have managed to by passed the rightful way to get to the hospital.

With common sense, one should be able to know that security cameras can improve staff performance and productivity at work because they know that they are being watched. It exposes lies or false claims simply because CCTV recordings will give video evidence of what took place.

There are so many benefits of CCTV, but we should not be over reliance on them. Sometimes staff can be so dependent of security cameras rather than actively checking on their patients which may be considered as negligence and patients can easily make a claim.

Installing CCTVs in hospital setting can be good or bad for the effectiveness of the security systems. It is important that they are installed both in and out of the building. Stairwells and elevators, and they should be under supervision for any possible danger. There are privacy issues we should take to consideration because these systems are being implemented and they may be open to manipulation or tampering. And in any type of monitoring, privacy issues may arise. So, it is very important that they comply with legal standard and they should be utilised ethically and efficiently. Security cameras in hallways have proven to be helpful as most traffic occurs there. Also, installing CCTV in parking lots and loading areas can help uncover suspicious activity outside. By every measure, the benefits of security cameras in hospitals can outweigh the disadvantages if they are legally used for the rightful purpose. (SecurityCamExpert, 2014)

However, some argued that there are disadvantages of the use of surveillance systems even though acknowledging the advantages of surveillance systems. According to others, broader issue of freedom of people outweighs this public good. Some do not believe CCTV can prevent crime and so many scholars have backed this claim. We all know that CCTV is giving us a false sense of security, and that authorities are using this technology as a way of reducing the number of police patrolling our street. The relationship between citizen and government has been damaged because of the introduction of CCTV. Citizens believed they are being spied upon (Clara, 2015)

Most importantly, there is the need to acknowledge the legal and ethical responsibility for the use of CCTV. Surveillance system installation must be done by qualified security engineers, but now small security cameras can be bought and install by anyone. However, there are legal and ethical implications of CCTV in the workplace.

According to research, an average person in the in London is like to be caught on surveillance cameras more than 70 times a day and around 70 times across the UK. Most of these recordings takes place at work. The use of surveillance cameras are controversial, because employers are now using it to monitor staff instead of using it for security and safety purposes. Body-worn cameras are being used by the health sector and organisations for staff safety or as evidence in court.

After introducing body-worn cameras for securities at Guy's and St. Thomas' hospital, they recorded 850 assaults on their staff between April and September 2016. But there is consent issues from employees and the public. The question is, are employers informing their staff that they are being filmed or do patient in hospitals know that they may be filmed?

Legally, employers must follow all requirements established in the Data Protection Act of 1998 and right of privacy set out by Human Rights Act 1998. That is why it is very important for managers to be aware of legal requirements and codes of practice that will serve as a guiding principle when using CCTV surveillance cameras.

Public freedom is so important that in 2012, the Protection of Freedom Act was passed. In this Act, a new code of practice that has to do with surveillance in public was published in 2013. There were recommendations for both public authorities and other organisations. With the aim of promoting and monitoring this new code, a surveillance commissioner was appointed. In 2015, the information commissioner's office published an updated code of practice for CCTV surveillance cameras and personal information. (Pam, 2017)

Before installing, you should make sure that your reasons for installing them are legitimate. Since the use of CCTV is reviewed every year, you should seek advice form your local data protection officer for guidance. Make sure you follow advice and ensure your surveillance systems complies with the law and ethics to protect patients. Patient confidentiality should be considered when installing your cameras. Seek professional advice or engineers for where placed or install the cameras.

There should be visible signs that states CCTV cameras in use. Images should be restricted and stored securely. Images should not be stored for longer unless they are needed for evidence in a court of law. Patient images should never be disclosed without their permission, except if the public benefit is greater. If other people are recorded, their images should be blurred to protect their confidentiality. You should ensure your privacy policy include safe storage of images, how long you should keep images and when to disclose to police when needed. (MDU 2018)

If serious crime has been committed, and it was captured on a CCTV in the hospital hallway or waiting room I think the health professional will not be blame for disclosing such videos for the good of all and will not be blamed for abusing confidentiality, as long as the practitioner did not disclose the medical record of the individual or the reason why the said person was at the hospital or what treatment he/she received. Any decision to disclose information about patient should be carefully taken and it is advisable to consult with relevant authorities. (CaseGuard, 2020)

It is important to note that if you want to install surveillance systems in your health facility, requires careful thought. You should consider how information are being stored, obtained, and analysed. Which videos should be seen or shared by third party? These are things that need to be taken with careful thought before surveillance cameras are installed or you may be violating data protection laws. It is also mandatory to inform the public, patients and staff that surveillance cameras are in operation and for what reason. They should also be made

aware of their right to access video containing their faces. There should be a lawful procedure put in place to access recordings for example, if the police or relevant authorities want access to such videos. Also, before disclosing any videos, be mindful of the legal requirements and public interests before choosing to reveal or disclose videos that exposes others. You also need to disguise or mask the faces of other people caught in the recordings. While doing this, do not forget to mention the disclosure date and who was present. (CaseGuard, 2020)

In 2010, there was a news report of a baby who was stolen from a hospital immediately after his birth in my country Sierra Leone. Until today, there is no information about who did it. Several investigations have been carried out, but nothing has come out from those investigations. We have heard so many stories around the world of swapping or kidnapping babies in hospitals but most of those stories have remain a misery. The reason why video surveillance is not only important, but also necessary is to deter criminals and prevent or reduce crime.

Conclusion

The use of CCTV in hospital is one of biggest success stories of contemporary technology in healthcare. Surveillance cameras cannot totally stop crime especially if someone is determined to commit one. But what it does, is to deter potential criminals and provide safety and security in the mind of staff, patient, and the public.

Some have argued that CCTV violates our privacy and therefore, suggest in their opinion that they are against the use of surveillance cameras.

It is sad to note that there are so many preventable crimes that have been committed in hospitals over the years around the world. Most of those crimes could have been either prevented or those who are responsible prosecuted if CCTV cameras were there to record their actions. The videos could have been used as evidence to bring them to justice in a court of law.

Finally, even though some are concerned and oppose about the use of surveillance cameras in hospital due to privacy reasons, the benefits of surveillance cameras in hospitals by far greater than the concern raised by critics.

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