

ask

THE DATA
SCIENTIST

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Q. *Recent events regarding an individual's privacy have launched a series of questions about who owns Personal Identifiable Information (PII). However, healthcare professionals should be asking a different question: Who is accountable for Personal Healthcare Information (PHI)?*

A. Access to a patient's healthcare data is a critical component of delivering quality care. When access to that data is either limited or denied, resolving a healthcare issue becomes complicated. For example:

A 90-year-old male in ill health lives in an assisted living facility and is cared for by his daughter who does not have any medical training. When picking up his prescriptions at the pharmacy, she realizes that there are 13 different prescriptions prescribed by four different physicians.

At this point, the caregiver is confused and unsure of how to proceed. The four physicians belong to three different healthcare organizations, and two different insurance plans cover the prescriptions. In addition, no one physician or insurance plan has all the data about this patient, creating a data privacy nightmare that prevents the patient from receiving quality care.

To overcome the challenges that individual privacy presents, healthcare organizations need to build data strategies around patients and the care they need and not around technology firewalls and compliance regulations. Privacy legislation is meant to protect and not inhibit the quality of care received.