POLICY PANEL: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO USING TECHNOLOGY-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR HIV PREVENTION AND CARE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the policy panel session was to gather experts in health technology development, HIV service delivery, and law and policy to discuss the benefits and challenges of providing technology-based HIV prevention and care, with a particular focus on health information security and privacy protection. The key discussion questions were: What are the primary concerns of clients regarding privacy and to what extent do clients have control over their private health information? What are the necessary precautions that clients can take to ensure that their health information is kept private? How can technology companies who interact with researchers and healthcare providers improve their privacy protections for clients?

Each panelist provided their unique perspective and experience on the topic. While no final standards (beyond HIPAA) or best practices were explored, the panelists and members of the audience expressed strong concerns about the sharing of protected health information and the overriding importance of helping clients to fully understand their risks when they are providing information through digital means. All agreed that privacy of client records must be paramount whether it involves the development of a mobile-based application that allows people to share their STD results with other dating partners or health-related information that clients take away from an agency (e.g., written referrals, lab results). With the rapid growth of technology and digital data, protection of client information remains an increasing challenge for researchers, healthcare providers, policy-makers, and other technology companies. More attention on consumer education, health and technology literacy, and increased transparency of protection policies is needed.