

Smart Glasses in Healthcare Settings

Question

What risks are associated with patients, visitors, clinicians, or staff members wearing “smart glasses” for personal use in healthcare settings?

Answer

Wearable technology is one of the many areas of quick growth in the digital landscape. Watches, fitness trackers, jewelry, glasses, and even clothing can collect, transmit, and display information that allows users to better understand and monitor their health, communicate and engage with others, manage their personal activities, get assistance, and increase awareness of their environments.¹

Although early prototypes of smart glasses did not catch on in popularity as expected, newer models are gaining traction.² These models have enhanced capabilities, such as improved photo and video capture, integration with social media platforms, livestreaming, and artificial intelligence (AI) functionality.

With this renewed interest in smart glasses comes revived concerns about the risks of the technology in general and particularly in sensitive spaces, such as healthcare settings. The most obvious and significant concern is privacy and security. Because smart glasses can capture photos, audio, and video — and because they are internet and AI enabled — their use could lead to privacy violations, data breaches, and cybersecurity risks.³

Although other smart devices also can pose these risks, smart glasses present a unique concern because they are less conspicuous. Although many models include indicators to show when they are taking photos or video (such as an LED light), those signals might not be as noticeable to someone unfamiliar with the technology (e.g., compared to someone holding up a smartphone to take video). Additionally, users have found workarounds to make the technology even more discreet and bypass any manufacturer attempts to address privacy (e.g., stickers that go over indicator lights).⁴

In some cases, smart glasses might be used as part of clinical research, planned safety or quality initiatives, or other clinical care in a healthcare facility. In these more controlled circumstances, organizations are aware of their use and should address risks and implement safeguards according to organizational privacy and security policies, internet of things (IoT) device management policies, and health information technology governance policies.

However, when smart glasses are used as consumer technology, these safeguards are not in place and organizations might be unaware individuals are taking, storing, and/or transmitting data onto the web and into vendor data repositories. Unlike other third-party technology vendors that partner with healthcare organizations under business associate agreements, smart glasses vendors are not subject to such requirements. This distinction may raise the potential risk for privacy lapses and data breaches.⁵

Beyond privacy and security, other concerns related to smart glasses include the potential for distractions and medical errors, the erosion of transparency and trust, negative effects on provider–patient relationships, and reputational harm if breaches occur.

To address these risks and concerns, healthcare organizations need to take a proactive rather than reactive stance regarding smart glasses. “In a time when technology is evolving faster than regulation, healthcare organizations must lead by example.”⁶ Risk mitigation strategies that healthcare leaders and decision-makers should consider include:

- Working with multiple stakeholders within the organization to identify and assess the risks that smart glasses impose. Examples of stakeholders include information technology, cybersecurity, human resources, clinical, and risk management staff.
- Developing a policy that addresses smart glasses (and other wearable devices that can record images, audio, and video). The policy should comply with federal and state privacy and security laws, and it should clearly delineate areas and circumstances in which these technologies are prohibited. If smart glasses are permitted in certain situations, the policy should specify appropriate uses and safeguards to protect sensitive data.
- Communicating clearly with patients, visitors, clinicians, and staff members about the organization’s policy regarding smart glasses. Posting signs at entry ways, in waiting areas, and in clinical care areas can help provide friendly reminders and reinforce the message.

- Training providers and staff members on organizational privacy and security policies, their importance, and the potential negative outcomes that may occur if privacy is breached (e.g., patient harm, fines and penalties, reputational damage, professional sanctions, and so on).
- Defining disciplinary actions for violating the organization's policy on smart glasses and other wearables. Employees and others affiliated with the organization should be aware of the consequences that could result from violations, including suspension or termination.
- Educating staff members about how to identify smart glasses and other wearable recording devices and diplomatically ask patients and visitors to remove them in prohibited areas. Scripts and role-playing exercises can help prepare staff for these situations.
- Incorporating questions about smart glasses and wearable devices into standard security screening or check-in processes. Doing so offers staff an opportunity to remind patients and visitors about the organization's policy for these devices.⁷

Learn More

For more information about privacy and security of protected health information, see MedPro's [Risk Resources: HIPAA](#) and [Risk Resources: Cybersecurity](#). To earn continuing education credit, take MedPro's free program titled [HIPAA Privacy & Security: Strategies for the Modern Era](#).

Endnotes

¹ Terrell Hanna, K., & Yasar, K. (2025, April 22). What is wearable technology? Definition, uses and examples. *TechTarget*. Retrieved from www.techtarget.com/searchmobilecomputing/definition/wearable-technology

² Framcombe, A. (2025, August 25). Meta has already won the smart glasses race. *Wired*. Retrieved from www.wired.com/story/meta-has-already-won-the-smart-glasses-race/

³ Zickgraf, G. (2025, September 9). *Hospitals should ban Meta Ray-Ban smart glasses*. LBMC. Retrieved from www.lbmc.com/blog/meta-rayban-smart-glasses-hospital-ban/

⁴ Kolbasuk McGee, M. (2025, December 19). Why smart glasses in hospitals are not a bright idea. *Bank Info Security*. Retrieved from www.bankinfosecurity.com/interviews/smart-glasses-in-hospitals-are-bright-idea-i-5509

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Zickgraf, *Hospitals should ban Meta Ray-Ban smart glasses*.

⁷ Ibid.; Diaz, N. (2025, December 18). Smart glasses spotlight privacy blind spots in healthcare. *Becker's Health IT*. Retrieved from www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/innovation/smart-glasses-spotlight-

[privacy-blind-spots-in-healthcare/](#); McGee, Why smart glasses in hospitals are not a bright idea; Sumner, J., Lim, H. W., Bundele, A., Chew, E. H. H., Chong, J. F., Koh, T., Sudin, R. B., & Yip, A. W. (2025). Through the lens: A qualitative exploration of nurses' experiences of smart glasses in urgent care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 34(3), 948–958. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.17313>

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