Electronic health records (EHRs) are designed to replace a patient’s paper record while integrating care across practice settings. As health care reform proceeds with an emphasis on integrated care, the ability for mental health professionals to collaborate with other health providers across practice settings will be critical to participation in the health care system. The use of EHRs is a key element of collaborative care.

This quiz highlights several core components of EHRs and is designed to raise awareness of professional considerations when transitioning from paper records to EHRs.

1. The primary difference between office management software (OMS) and an EHR is:
   - A. The applicability of standards related to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act
   - B. The capacity for interoperability
   - C. Billing functionality
   - D. User-based access functions

2. True or false? If a patient asks for a copy of his or her record, a psychologist must provide it.

3. Many EHRs now offer mobile applications (“apps”) that allow providers to access patient records on a smart phone, iPad or similar mobile device. HIPAA and the HITECH Act require a psychologist using apps to take precautions to ensure that “protected health information” (PHI) remains secure. PHI includes which of the following:
   - A. A patient’s phone number
   - B. A patient’s insurance information
   - C. Text messages to/from the patient
   - D. A patient’s medical record number
   - E. None of the above
   - F. All of the above

4. What can you do in order to safeguard your mobile device or tablet against a potential breach?
   - A. Make sure that you are accessing records through a secure wireless (wi-fi) internet connection
   - B. Ensure that your data is encrypted
   - C. Deactivate mobile-to-mobile sharing functions on your device
   - D. None of the above
   - E. All of the above

5. True or false? Role-based access for EHRs means that all practitioners who have the same role in a practice use the same login credentials – the same username and password – to access and amend patient records.

6. Data segmentation refers to:
   - A. Separating patient data within your EHR to make it easier for you to find
   - B. Using separate billing codes for different patient diagnoses
   - C. Identifying which portion of your patient’s records may be shared with other providers
   - D. The ways in which EHR user roles are defined
1. The correct answer is B. Electronic health records (EHRs) are intended to share information across practice disciplines and settings, and to enable interconnectivity for clinical and treatment purposes. This capacity is known as interoperability. Office management systems provide electronic business management and data storage, and they can support electronic billing. But an OMS is not interoperable with other office management systems or EHRs.

2. The correct answer is true. Whether you maintain records in electronic or paper format. However, there are exceptions to the general rule. For example, psychologists can withhold information contained in the record if they think there is a risk to the physical safety of the patient or others by providing that information. Further, some states allow psychologists to withhold psychotherapy notes while other states do not. If you already maintain patient records electronically, you are expected under HIPAA to provide a copy electronically to the requesting patient. It is important for psychologists to understand both HIPAA and relevant state law governing the release of records to patients.

A thorough analysis of the state-specific issue of responding to patient requests for records is provided in HIPAA for Psychologists, an online product developed jointly by the APA Practice Organization and the APA Insurance Trust. This resource is found at the Practice Central website: apapracticecentral.org.

3. The correct answer is F. All four items are considered protected health information. The development of new technology facilitates access to records on the go, and mobile devices such as cell phones and tablets often allow access to PHI. Therefore, it’s up to the provider to ensure that their mobile devices remain locked when not in use and that the information contained therein is encrypted.

4. The correct answer is E. In addition to these precautions, additional measures include password protecting all devices and using an application or software that can remotely remove or delete all patient data in the event the device is lost or stolen.

5. The correct answer is false. The concept of “role-based access” for EHRs relates to who can access particular levels of information in a patient’s record. In EHRs, each provider and practice staffer with access to patient records retains his or her own unique login credentials. Role-based access allows system users to access only the information they need in order to perform their jobs. For example, a practitioner requires access to a different level of information than does an administrative assistant.

6. The correct answer is C. Data segmentation allows for specific parts of the patient’s record to be shared with practitioners across disciplines who have been identified as needing to know the information. The level of customizability differs among various types of EHR software. Decisions about data segmentation may result from discussions involving the practitioner, the EHR vendor and the patient.

In the event of an emergency, such as hospitalization when the psychologist is unavailable, data segmentation can be suspended so providers can access additional needed data. Any access to a patient’s record would leave an electronic “paper trail” indicating who accessed a patient’s record, what was viewed and when it was accessed.