

Name:
DOB:
Chart:
Age:
Date:

HIPAA

Privacy and Confidentiality

Why are privacy and confidentiality important?

No matter where one works in healthcare - the hospital, labs, radiology centers, nursing homes, doctors' offices, business units IT, or in the patient's home - it is important to understand what privacy and confidentiality mean.

Patients have the right to control who will see their protected, identifiable health information. Communications with our about patients involving patient health information will be private and limited to those who need the information for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations. Such communications may involve verbal discussions, written communications, or electronic communications. Only those people with an authorized need to know will have access to the protected information.

Hospitals and healthcare organizations have always upheld strict privacy and confidentiality policies. Unless you are new to healthcare, this idea will be familiar to you. However, the U.S. government strengthened the laws protecting privacy and confidentiality in response to situations in which private medical information has ended up in the wrong hands.

There have been cases in which employers have fired good employees after learning of illness that could lead to lost work time and increased insurance costs, people's medical information has ended up in the newspaper, and medical information has been used to damage other's reputations.

With the enactment of HIPAA - the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, patients have the right to keep their medical information kept private and secure. It no longer is an ethical issue - it is the law.

So what is HIPAA?

HIPAA is a broad law that deals with quite a variety of issues. Part of the focus of the law is to make it easier to move from one health insurance carrier to another. Because of this they must have their medical information and other information moved, as well.

HIPAA provided for healthcare organizations to standardize the way they communicate with one another to make it easier to share information. This is especially important to transmit information electronically.

With the ease of records transfer it is also easy to sort out patients who have expensive illnesses or potentially use that information to hurt their chances at getting jobs or insurance.

As a result HIPAA focuses on patient privacy and confidentiality. Under the law it is illegal to release health information to inappropriate parties or to fail to adequately protect health information from release.

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What information do we keep confidential?

Confidential information also includes the reason a person is sick or in the hospital, the and any other personal information that patients are asked to provide.

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Penalties associated with violation of HIPAA

Civil penalties are fines up to \$100 for each violation of the law per person, up to a limit of \$25,000. For example, if 100 patient records were released illegally, a healthcare institution could be fined \$10,000.

Criminal penalties for wrongful disclosure can also result in jail time. The criminal penalties increase as the severity of the offense increases. Intentionally selling patient information is significantly more serious than accidental disclosure. These fines can be as high as \$250,000 or a prison sentence of 10 years.

How do we protect our patient's privacy?

We are committed to protecting patient privacy and confidentiality in the following ways:

- Patient care or discussion about patient care is kept private by closing doors or conducting them in an area where the discussion will not be overheard
- Patient medical records are not left where others can see them or gain access to them
- Computerized patient records are closed when the caregiver is away from the computer
- Written patient information is kept covered from the public
- Diagnostic test results are kept private
- Paper records no longer needed are shredded or placed in closed receptacles for disposal. They are not left in the garbage.
- Information is not disclosed to visitors about a patient

Signature below is only acknowledgement that you have received this Notice of our Privacy Practices.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____