

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: This HIPAA Breach Lasted 4 Years

Plus: CMS Grants 'CLIA-Waived' Status to 9 Lab Tests

You know that it's illegal for your employees to snoop around in patient files when they don't have a medically necessary reason to be looking—but one health system employee took such an infraction to the extreme. A licensed practical nurse (LPN) at a large medical group in Virginia inappropriately accessed nearly 1,000 patients' social security numbers and medical histories from their EHRs over a four-year period, the Hampton Roads, Va. Daily Press reported last week.

The company discovered the breach during a random audit in November, after which the health system began contacting the patients who were affected.

If nothing else, this latest news should serve as a reminder of how important it is for you to create strict patient privacy policies, train your staff on how to follow them, and audit/monitor the records often to ensure that your employees are carefully following the HIPAA rules. To view the HIPAA audit protocols, visit www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/enforcement/audit/protocol.html.