

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Your Employees' Facebook Posts Could Come Back To Haunt You

on't risk patients' privacy just to blow off steam.

The last thing your practice needs is to deal with the fallout from an employee turning to social media to blow off steam after working with your patients.

Think a HIPAA breach won't happen? Think again. Alexandra Thran of Westerly Hospital in Charlestown, R.I. took to her Facebook account to recount a few of her emergency room encounters. Though she was careful not to reveal any patient names, people still figured out who she was talking about, which is a breach of protected health information under HIPAA, according to a Rhode Island Department of Health press release.

After realizing her mistake, Thran shut down her account, but the damage had been done. She was fired from the hospital and forced to pay a \$500 administrative fee.

Lesson learned: Even if your clinicians have placed strict controls on who can view their Facebook pages, their friends and family members will still have access to any content they post -- including any patient information they share. Coach your staffers to never take to social media when they need to deal with work stress. Facebook, Twitter, and other networking sites are never truly private.