

Health Information Compliance Alert

Health Industry Under-Prepared to Protect Patient Privacy

Risk of data breaches rise with new access to digital health information, says PwC.

Health Research Institute at Pricewaterhouse Cooper (PwC) US released a new report about privacy and security in the healthcare industry in September 2011 which says that existing privacy and security controls have not kept pace with new realities in healthcare: increased access to information in electronic health records; greater data collaboration with external partners and business associations; the emergence of new uses for digital health information to improve the quality and cost of care; and the rise of social media and mobile technology to better and more efficiently manage patient health.

The nationwide PwC Health Research Institute survey of 600 executives from US hospitals and physician organizations, health insurers, and pharmaceutical and life sciences companies found that theft accounted for 66 percent of total reported health data breaches over the past two years. Also, **medical identity theft appears to be on the rise**. Over one third (36 percent) of provider organizations (hospitals and physician groups) confirmed that they have experienced patients seeking services using somebody else's name and identification.

Here is a question for our readers:

How do you think identity theft can be prevented in your practice or facility?

Please share with us your experiences with regard to protection against identity theft and what steps you took to prevent data breach.

Please send your response to kalponam@codinginstitute.com. We look forward to hearing from you and would be glad to share your experiences and views with our other readers. In our next issue we will bring you the views of our experts on necessary steps to protect against identity theft and the implications of identity theft for your practice or facility.