

Health Information Compliance Alert

Marketing: ECKERD DRAWS IRE FOR STICKER SWITCH

Eckerd Corp.'s patient signature switcharoo scheme has privacy advocates and an attorney general calling for punishment.

Already the focus of a class action lawsuit over their practice of "rounding up" medication amounts, the St. Petersburg Times reports that Eckerd is now being investigated by Florida's attorney general over manipulation of its customers' signatures.

Eckerd customers who don't want a pharmacist's counseling when they pick up their prescriptions are required to sign a log indicating that they have refused the service. What most customers don't realize, however, is that they are signing a removable sticker. Eckerd allegedly then removes the sticker and attaches it to a form authorizing the company to use the customer's medication records for targeted marketing funded by drug manufacturers.

An investigator for Attorney General **Bob Butterworth's** economic crimes unit tells the Times that none of the customers interviewed by investigators knew what they were signing. "If we surveyed 1,000 customers, I'd guarantee 99 percent didn't know what they were authorizing," says **Gerard Lockwood**.

The company denies any wrongdoing and points out that the prescription information is not shared with outside companies. Instead, Eckerd employees at the company's Therapeutic Support Center in Pittsburgh use the customer info themselves to carry out marketing paid for by pharmaceutical companies.