

## Health Information Compliance Alert

### Reader Questions: Auto-Reminders Won't Erase Your Compliance Efforts

**Question:**

We plan to hire a service to send automatic telephone reminders to our patients who have scheduled appointments. The reminders will contain the patient's name, the doctor's name and the time of the appointment. Is this practice privacy rule-compliant?

-- Florida subscriber

**Answer:**

"Yes," says **Daniel Shepherd**, privacy officer for Ocean Springs, MS-based **Singing River Hospital System**.

Good idea: Keep your appointment reminders free of any other patient information, Shepherd cautions. For example, rather than "You have an appointment with Dr. Jones at Obstetric Medicine Group tomorrow morning," your reminder should state "Dr. Jones is going to see you in the office tomorrow morning."

The Bottom Line: You can supply your patients with enough information to get them to their appointment without disclosing any PHI, Shepherd assures. **Remember:** If you decide to notify your patients through automatic telephone reminders, you must let them know in your notice of privacy practices.