

Health Information Compliance Alert

THWARTS Privacy PRIVACY RULE MEDICAL RESEARCH

A coalition of health care groups Feb. 8 warned Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson that portions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act's privacy rule could have a baneful effect on medical research.

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Signed by scores of trade groups including the American Hospital Association and the American Medical Association, the missive in particular urges HHS to change the standard for de-identifying medical information. According to the letter, the current standard "is so stringent that complying with it would render data useless for much epidemiological, health services and other populationbased research."

The coalition argues that the standard should be modified so that only direct identifiers — such as names, addresses, and social security numbers — need to be stripped from medical information.