

Issue 1:

Yesterday, a call came into the ICU nursing station from what sounds like an elderly woman. She said she is the grandmother of one of the patients on the unit named John Smith who, she just learned from a neighbor, had emergency surgery two days earlier after an accident at the factory where he worked. She was obviously distressed and wanted to know how her 25-year old grandson was doing.

- If the grandmother wants information and doesn't have rights to the PHI, then information should not be released. Authorization either electronic or paper form.
 - o Social Issue – Sympathy of course realizing the relationship.
 - o You can give room number, and in the hospital. Only if the patient or family has agreed to be listed in the hospitals directory.

Issue 2:

A preliminary investigation found the neighbor had downloaded and printed out the medical records of 510 hospital patients 3 days earlier, including the records of John Smith.

- The issue of the grandmother's neighbor is a security breach with the hospital. What are the issues around this? Was the neighbor an employee that was privy to the records or external to the hospital?

Issue 3:

Last night, a Chicago Police Officer called the ICU asking them to fax over copies of the patient's blood tests and other lab results from when he was admitted through the ED, because Mr. Smith's supervisor suspects that drugs were a cause of Mr. Smith's accident.

- Access to the information by Chicago Police Department should only get access to the information through court order.
 - o Chain of evidence
 - o The hunch of the employer supervisor that Mr. Smith was on drugs is not based on anything concrete and the employer does not have access to the medical records either.

Issue 4:

Early this morning, a representative from Blue Cross/Blue Shield called and wanted additional medical treatment information to begin processing Mr. Smith's insurance claim.

- Access to the information by the insurance company is a legitimate request only if it is a work man's comp claim
 - o Is it workman's claim?
 - o Should the insurance company have access to the information being requested?

Issue 5:

Shortly thereafter, while a nurse was checking Mr. Smith's vital signs, his wife came in to visit. Mrs. Smith begins to ask questions about Mr. Smith's care, including what data the hospital has on how many other patients in this hospital have ever come down with this particular post-op bacterial infection. The nurse told her that "they did a study a year or so ago, but that this kind of post-op infection still happens all the time here, so we just treat them as best as we can" and gave her a copy of a 1-year old internal memo from the hospital's clinical informatics department that showed an increasing trend in post-op bacterial infections at the hospital. The wife finds her way to the hospital informatics department and speaks at length to the informaticist who wrote that old memo and who is an independent consultant hired for this 2-year research project.

Issue 6:

Mid-morning, the wife called the hospital CEO and demanded that he cancel any medical billing for her husband's admission because the hospital caused her husband's life-threatening infection and knew this was a hospital problem of long-standing,

Issue 7:

or else she will call The Chicago Tribune and report what the nurse told her, as well as supply the newspaper with a copy of that old hospital memo. The CEO wants to talk to you about this situation and what to do about it.