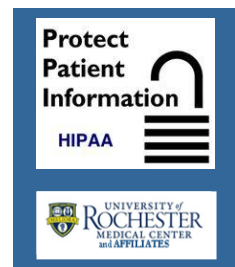


HIPAA HIGHLIGHTS

August 2024

Zip Your Lips - Verbal HIPAA Violations



The Privacy Office received several inquiries about verbal disclosures of patient PHI to family members or others in the community. After investigations, in some cases we have had to notify the patient of a privacy breach, and the involved staff received a disciplinary sanction. We don't want this to be you. Please take a moment to answer the one question quiz and review the answer and information below.

Which of the following is an example of an appropriate verbal disclosure?

- A. Discussing patient information with your spouse.
- B. Discussing patient information in a public place such as an elevator or hallway.
- C. Discussing a patient's care and health information with another member of their care team.
- D. Discussing patient information in front of their visitor without the patient's permission.

If you choose C as the answer, you are correct. Having a discussion with a member of the patient's care team is appropriate. If a staff member or coworker is not on the care team or does not have a business reason to know about the patient, information should not be shared.

Choice A - Discussing patient information with your spouse, other members of your household or friends and acquaintances in the community can lead to a violation of our patient's privacy. Also, acknowledging a patient while in public could potentially lead to a privacy violation.

Choice B - Discussing patient information in a public place such as an elevator or hallway can lead to violations of patient privacy.

Choice D - Discussing patient information in front of a visitor without the patient's permission may also lead to a privacy violation.

- It is never okay to discuss our patients with family and friends, even if you think it may be de-identified, you may give enough details to re-identify the patient.
- Be aware of your surroundings when discussing patient information. Growing up you may have been told to use your "indoor" voice and it has never been more relevant than in healthcare. You never know who may be listening.

For additional information on any HIPAA-related topics, please refer to the URMS intranet site at <http://sites.mc.rochester.edu/departments/hipaa/>. For any questions regarding HIPAA, please contact your Privacy Officer or HIPAA Security Official.

