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## America's Health Care System Increasingly Unsafe

### *Citizens' Council for Health Freedom Says Connecting the Dots of Health Care Safety Paints Disturbing Picture*

**ST. PAUL, Minn.**—The blue and white “H” signs signifying a nearby hospital should be symbols of safety and help for those in need of medical care. But increased privacy intrusions, growing threats to parental rights, and encroaching government regulations that diminish quality of care have all contributed to making our nation's health care system an increasingly unsafe place for Americans.

**Citizens' Council for Health Freedom (CCHF, [www.cchffreedom.org](http://www.cchffreedom.org))**, a Minnesota-based national organization dedicated to preserving patient-centered health care and protecting patient and privacy rights, has been documenting threats to America's health care system for 20 years, and says that when you connect the dots, seemingly unrelated concerns paint a picture that is anything but reassuring.

***“In recent months, we've seen everything from state collection and storage of newborn blood samples without parental consent and federal efforts to warehouse Americans' health information to electronic health records' hurting patient care and the State taking custody of a child because her parents disagreed with a medical diagnosis,” said CCHF president and co-founder Twila Brase. “Each of these, taken individually, is cause for serious concern, but when you view the full picture, it becomes alarmingly clear that taken together, all of these things point to a health care system that is becoming increasingly unsafe for patients.”***

**CCHF** provided several specific examples of actual threats to patient privacy and care, including:

1. The case of Justina Pelletier, a teenager who was forcibly taken from her parents' care after two hospitals disagreed over her diagnosis. After 16 months in the custody of the state, Justina was at last permitted to return home to her parents.
2. The recent passage by the Minnesota State Legislature of a bill allowing the State to store, use and share newborn DNA samples without parental consent, skirting a 2011 State Supreme Court ruling that ordered such samples destroyed.
3. A recent incident in Michigan in which a hospital inaccurately posted a sign advising parents of children 12-17 years of age that new laws “require a nurse to have a short 5-minute private conversation with your child.”

4. A recent Politico Pro eHealth article noting that electronic health records (EHRs) are driving doctors to distraction and taking their attention away from treating patients.
5. A new report on EHR safety, published in the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, reporting “increased potential for patient harm” and finding few institutions are able to monitor for unsafe technology and unsafe use of the technology.
6. The federal government’s biosurveillance plan, which proposes examining “data from electronic medical health records” and calls for “cooperation among federal and non-federal stakeholders, including the scientific community and public and private healthcare providers ... to achieve an efficient and reliable surveillance system” – in essence, warehousing all Americans’ health information.

These are just a few examples in a foreboding trend towards a health care system that Americans need protection *from*, rather than one they can trust not only to treat them but also to protect them.

***“When you make hospitals and clinics unsafe places to go, people become afraid of hospitals and clinics,” Brase continued. “They’re afraid they’ll have their kids taken from them, afraid their private medical information will be compromised, afraid their doctor may make a mistake because he or she is focused on typing information into EHRs, afraid they’ll be forced to get vaccinations, and the list goes on and on. Now, patients need to think twice about being patients. And parents need to think twice, too, because of the risks that result from a health care system that empowers the state and disempowers parents.”***

Arguments for the storage of newborn blood samples, the warehousing of Americans’ medical data, mandatory EHRs and more often center around the supposed benefits to society. But Brase says these arguments are insufficient, and much more is at stake.

***“The thing about living in a free country is that there are risks that accompany freedom,” she said. “The greatest risk of all is if you lose freedom and live at the behest of the state. And that’s exactly where many of the trends in health care today are leading. There are definitely risks in freedom. Freedom itself has its own risks, but no freedom is the greatest risk of all.”***

*Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year, Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom is a patient-centered national health freedom organization based in St. Paul, Minn. CCHF exists to protect health care choices and patient privacy. CCHF sponsors the daily, 60-second radio feature, Health Freedom Minute, which airs on more than 150 stations nationwide on the American Family Radio Network and 90-plus stations on the Bott Radio Network. Listeners can learn more about the agenda behind proposed health care initiatives and steps they can take to protect their health care choices, rights and privacy.*

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**For more information or to interview Twila Brase, president and co-founder of Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom, contact Deborah Hamilton, Hamilton Strategies, 215.815.7716, 610.584.1096, [DHamilton@HamiltonStrategies.com](mailto:DHamilton@HamiltonStrategies.com).**