NEWS RELEASE

Data Dangers: Americans' Electronic Medical Records at Risk for Hacking

Citizens' Council for Health Freedom: *Shared Health Records and an Unsecure* [*HealthCare.gov*](HealthCare.gov) *Endanger Patient Privacy*

ST. PAUL, Minn.— Last week, Community Health Systems, which operates 206 hospitals in 28 states, announced hackers had broken into its computer system and stolen data on 4.5 million patients. That data included names, Social Security numbers, physical addresses, birthdays and telephone numbers, paving the way for criminals to open bank accounts and credit cards in the patients' names.

Meanwhile, the Obama Administration has announced it will not release records related to security features built into the federal health care exchange, claiming that doing so could "potentially" allow hackers to break in.

Twila Brase, president and co-founder of ***Citizens' Council for Health Freedom (CCHF,*** [***www.cchfreedom.org***](www.cchfreedom.org)***)***, a Minnesota-based national organization dedicated to preserving patient-centered health care and protecting patient and privacy rights, says HealthCare.gov security has always been a concern and that electronic medical records under the interoperability mandate and HIPAA's "no-privacy" rule share private patient data with entirely too many entities.

"The protection of patients' private medical data simply isn't being taken seriously," Brase said. "Patient privacy was dismissed with HIPAA and data security was never prioritized. In the black market of data worth capturing, private patient data is the jewel. With this data being stolen by criminals as well as shared with countless government agencies, there's no telling how it will be used against Americans.

"For example," she continued, "once private patient data is exposed and in the wrong hands, political or economic blackmail is a possibility. Medical ID theft could lead not only to fraud but also to incorrect diagnoses in a medical record. Hackers with the potential to manipulate data could change the patient's record, leading to drug reactions or wrong-blood-type transfusions. They could hack into medical devices to disable them and harm patients. These scenarios sound like the makings of an action movie, but the potential for disaster is very real."

According to news reports last week, "the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) denied a request by The Associated Press under the Freedom of Information Act for documents about the kinds of security software and computer systems behind the federally funded HealthCare.gov." AP requested the records last year after Republicans raised concerns about the security of the online exchange.

Those concerns are valid, Brase says. She recently reported in the weekly *CCHF* e-newsletter that criminal attacks on health care data have increased by 100 percent in just four years. Most were a result of human error, and of the breaches, 78 percent took months to discover and 84 percent were discovered by outsiders. In 2013 alone, about 200 data breaches exposed more than 7 million patient records.

"This administration is building a national health information exchange for all medical data and a federal health insurance exchange for all insurance and financial data. Without Congressional intervention, we foresee these two insecure data systems being joined together, putting our financial and medical data within reach of hackers and outsiders. That's not privacy, and there's no security," said Brase. "Security experts have already testified before Congress that the federal health insurance exchange was never built for security and, therefore, should be shut down and recreated."

*Celebrating its 20th 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.*

***CCHF** president and co-founder Twila Brase, R.N., has been called one of the "100 Most Powerful People in Health Care" and one of "Minnesota's 100 Most Influential Health Care Leaders." Brase, a public health nurse, has been interviewed by CNN, Fox News, Minnesota Public Radio, NBC Nightly News, NBC's Today Show, NPR, New York Public Radio, the Associated Press, Modern Healthcare, TIME, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post and The Washington Times, among others. She is at the forefront of informing the public of crucial health issues, such as intrusive wellness and prevention initiatives in Obamacare, patient privacy, informed consent, the dangers of "evidence-based medicine" and the implications of state and federal health care reform.*

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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.**