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Will Congress Reduce Privacy for Patients With Substance Use Issues?

We’ve discovered a disturbing part of the third coronavirus bill. It would require patient consent for sharing data of patients with substance use disorders. But it has various loopholes and allows data to be redisclosed to others countless times after an initial consent is signed. Today, a federal regulation allows zero redisclosures of this sensitive information without a separate and specific patient consent.

The bill’s language prohibits discrimination and protects data from legal and legislative proceedings. But today’s federal regulation for patients with this disorder is so strong that they are already protected from these uses of their data. Bottom line, this is less protective, not more. It allows sharing where no sharing is allowed today without consent.

H.R. 748 (“Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act”), Section 3221, passed by the U.S. Senate on March 26, 2020: https://bit.ly/2xAeQrF