

October 7, 2014

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Audit, investigation uncovers 247 patient records breached

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is notifying 247 patients and families after an Alberta Children’s Hospital (ACH) staff member inappropriately accessed personal health information.

The staff member is no longer working for AHS. The breaches were detected during regular audits of AHS’ patient databases, which sparked an investigation by a team consisting of AHS Privacy, Human Resources and ACH.

AHS will not be releasing further information about these patients.

“I want to apologize to all patients whose privacy has been breached. AHS takes the privacy and confidentiality of patient information seriously, so I find this lapse intolerable,” says Vickie Kaminski, President and CEO. “While the incident did not impact patient care, or the integrity of patient records, any breach is inexcusable. I want to assure Albertans that we take our role as protector of health information very seriously, and will take appropriate action to reduce the chance of this happening again.”

AHS Privacy is working with ACH leadership to notify the individuals whose information was breached. AHS Privacy will continue to work with the site to ensure all staff have taken appropriate training and will continue to proactively audit the health information of patients who receive health services.

All AHS staff members are required to act in accordance with Alberta’s privacy legislation, and with AHS Information Management and Technology policies. This includes staff taking training on protecting patients’ privacy and signing confidentiality and user agreements.

The privacy breaches were first noticed during an audit of the Netcare patient record system, which revealed patient records were being inappropriately accessed by one staff member over a 14-month period. An audit of a second database, called Clinibase, revealed further breaches by the same staff member. Information that may have been accessed included patient history, contact information, date of birth, names of relatives, and emergency contact information.

Alberta’s Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has been notified. Patients with concerns can call 1-855-550-2555.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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