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Medical Group Settles HIPAA Case After Physician Talks About Patient to TV Reporter

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Allergy Associates of Hartford, a medical group in Connecticut, agreed to pay \$125,000 to settle potential violations of the HIPAA Privacy Rule after one of its physicians talked to a television reporter about a patient after the privacy officer told him not to, the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) said Nov. 26. Allergy Associates didn't discipline the physician or take corrective action, OCR said.

The case was set in motion with the patient's Feb. 20, 2015, visit to the doctor's office. The patient told Fox61, a TV station in Connecticut, that the physician "kicked her out" because she showed up for her appointment with a service dog, according to the TV station. The reporter also spoke to the physician, but the story has no details because it says the physician decided his comments weren't on the record. The resolution agreement with OCR simply states that "an Allergy Associates Workforce Member had a conversation with a Reporter regarding the Reporter's investigation of the Complainant's allegation that she was turned away from Allergy Associates because of her use of a service animal. The Workforce Member impermissibly disclosed the PHI [protected health information] of the Complainant. Following the impermissible disclosure, and after HHS notified Allergy Associates that it initiated its investigation, Allergy Associates failed to sanction the Workforce Member for the impermissible disclosure."

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