

Report on Patient Privacy Volume 18, Number 3. March 31, 2018 (Almost) Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Blockchain But Were Afraid to Ask

By HCCA Staff

Blockchain is among the innovations that are expected to catch on in health care. But leaders at many HIPAA covered entities (CEs) and business associates are understandably confused about the term and might not feel confident engaging in even superficial discussions about blockchain with their privacy and security colleagues. This is understandable, with ransomware, breaches, mobile devices and emerging cybersecurity threats to keep them up at night.

To help introduce blockchain to privacy and security officers, *RPP* spoke to Anh Ngo, MD, a board certified anesthesiologist who is an expert on blockchain as well as on Bitcoin, the first and best known manifestation of blockchain.

Ngo (pronounced “no,”) is a big believer in blockchain for its potential to “disrupt” health care. (He’s also the sort of person who uses disrupt as a positive term and he previously “mined” for Bitcoin). He is a peer reviewer for a new online, open access journal, *Blockchain in HealthCare Today* (see <https://tinyurl.com/yamu36wg>).

Ngo, who describes himself as “not your typical physician,” tells *RPP* blockchain may be most useful for billing and ordering, but it also could provide significant benefits in speeding up the secure exchange of protected health information (PHI) between patients and providers. No doubt there are also challenges to adoption, says Ngo, including how implementation of blockchain will be regulated.

But Ngo suggests solutions can be gleaned from how the financial industry and its regulators have grappled with similar issues related to Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Don’t fret if confusion remains about blockchain because Ngo says there are newer hot concepts just around the corner.

RPP: Tell us about your interest in blockchain and how you got started with the concept.

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