



Issuing Department: Internal Audit, Compliance, and Enterprise Risk Management

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Use and Disclosure of PHI in the Patient Directory

Policy

The Medical Center may disclose Patient Directory information to persons who ask for the patient by name and to members of the Chaplaincy Services Department, unless a patient declines to be listed.

The information in the Patient Directory consists of a patient's name, room, and bed number. All patients have the opportunity to decline to be listed. If a patient declines, the decision must be clearly documented in the patient's medical record.

Procedure

1. Upon admission into the Hospital, registration into an interventional procedure in Article 28 outpatient space, or into the Emergency Department, admitting staff will provide the patient with the "Patient Directory Opt-Out" Form. Failure to complete the Form will result in the patient being listed in the Patient Directory.
2. Admitting Workforce Members are responsible for scanning the completed Patient Directory Opt-Out Form or entering the information into the patient's medical record.
3. Workforce Members must refer all requests for Patient Directory information to the departments that are authorized and trained to provide Patient Directory information.
4. The patient has the right to change his or her decision to be listed in the Patient Directory at any time by notifying the Patient Access (Admitting) Department at (212) 263-5005.

Emergency Circumstances

In some cases, it may not be possible to allow the patient the opportunity to opt-out of the Patient Directory because the patient is incapacitated or in need of emergency treatment when they arrive at the Hospital. This may occur, for example, if the patient is unconscious when first brought to the Emergency Department. It may also occur if the patient is conscious and capable of making a decision, but is so seriously injured that asking permission to include his or her information in the Patient Directory would delay treatment in a way that would jeopardize the

patient's health. In such emergency situations, the patient's name, room, and bed number may be disclosed to persons who ask for the patient by name if a Hospital staff member responsible for the patient's care determines that disclosure is in the patient's best interest and is consistent with any prior information the Medical Center has about the patient's preferences.

- In some cases, it will not be appropriate to disclose certain pieces of information (such as the patient's location in the Hospital), in order to protect the patient's interests.
- When deciding what information, if any, may be disclosed, the following factors should be considered:
 - whether disclosing that the patient is in the Hospital could cause harm or danger to the patient (e.g. disclosing information to a potential attacker)
 - whether disclosing a patient's location within the Hospital would give information about the patient's condition (for example, if the room number revealed that the patient was in a psychiatric ward)
 - whether it is necessary or appropriate to give information about the patient's status to family or friends (for example, if necessary to find out if the patient's family know more about his or her condition or prior history because the patient is unconscious)
 - whether the patient has previously expressed a preference about how information should be used in the Patient Directory

As soon as possible after the patient's incapacity or emergency treatment is over, the procedures described above for ordinary circumstances must be followed. The patient must be informed of this policy and given an opportunity to decline to be listed in the Patient Directory.

Related Documents

General Uses and Disclosures of PHI
Patient Directory Opt-Out Form

Legal Reference

45 C.F.R. §164.510(a)

This version supersedes all previous Hospitals Center, School of Medicine, and/or Medical Center policies.