

Nursing update



Uncontrolled curiosity can do a world of harm

Accessing *any* patient information outside of one's job responsibilities is considered an inappropriate access and a HIPAA Privacy Rule violation that may be reportable to the patient, the Office of Civil Rights or a professional licensing board.

However, despite annual and focused education and communications about the HIPAA Privacy Rule and appropriate access of patient information, inappropriate accesses continue.

Access audits — which are conducted routinely, frequently and specifically in instances of high-profile news stories — have uncovered multiple violations. Since the beginning of the calendar year, six employees have been terminated for inappropriate access to patient health information due to uncontrolled curiosity. Several other access investigations are currently underway.

So before you access patient information, ask yourself, "Is my access to patient information necessary for me to perform my job?" If not, *don't do it*. If you have questions or concerns, contact Brett Stout, Privacy Coordinator at 719-3184.

Great catch at Via Christi Clinic on Founder's Circle

Kelsey Zorn, RN, who works in Phase 1 Recovery at Via Christi Clinic's ambulatory surgery center on Founder's Circle, recently provided post-operative care to a patient who had undergone a tonsillectomy. She noted the patient was in a bundle branch block and notified the anesthesiologist and relayed the information to her Phase 2 Recovery teammate, Tiffany Vliem, RN.

While closely monitoring the patient, Tiffany, who had a "gut instinct" that something wasn't right, pushed for a 12-lead EKG, which revealed more EKG changes that were then conveyed to the anesthesiologist, who recommended that the patient be transferred by EMS to the hospital.

During the transfer process, the patient became symptomatic and required further intervention due to chest pain. Upon arrival at the hospital, the patient had a stat heart cath, followed several days later by CABG once the patient was stable enough for surgery.

"Needless to say, there were many potential and very serious negative outcomes that this patient could have experienced if she would have been sent home without intervention," wrote Mandy McCombs, RN, who had just completed her first week as PACU supervisor. "I am so thankful for the diligent nursing staff that initially caught this and persisted until the patient was safe."

Keep up the great work, Kelsey, Tiffany, Mandy and team! As nurses, we can all use a reminder to listen to our gut and speak up on behalf of patients and families who are counting on us to serve as their voice and advocate.