

What DCs Should Know About Security Cameras and HIPAA

Security surveillance cameras are showing up everywhere. For chiropractic practices, surveillance cameras offer patients and staff an added measure of safety. Because you are operating a healthcare facility, however, you need to be aware of HIPAA concerns if you decide to use these cameras.

Security cameras at the front and back entrances are generally acceptable as these are considered public areas. Nonetheless these should be accompanied with a highly visible notice that the areas are being monitored by video surveillance.

When using security cameras, you must ensure that they don't compromise patients' protected health information (PHI). Keep in mind that PHI not only encompasses information in the clinical records, but also biometric identifiers including voice prints and full-face photographic images.

Steps to Reduce Risk

To mitigate a HIPAA violation or allegation of a PHI breach, make sure not to install the video cameras in private areas (such as exam rooms). Additionally, take care that there is no possibility of the public viewing any recorded information. Create a policy and procedure for your staff regarding the use of, management and disposal of the cameras/recordings. It also can be beneficial to identify:

- Who will have access to the recordings
- How long the recordings will be kept
- Where the recordings will be kept
- How the recordings will be disposed of (disposal must be consistent with disposing other PHI, if present)
- How recordings will be released in the event of a request to prevent the unintentional release of other PHI
- How to prevent hacking
- What encryption is used if video is stored
- When to obtain a business associate agreement If cameras will be monitored by a third party
- What HIPAA training is needed for staff who has access to PHI in the recordings

Risk Versus Reward

Although security cameras must be used with caution to avoid jeopardizing patient privacy, they are the wave of the future. Now is the time to ensure that PHI remains confidential as practice security measures are put in place.