

Important Privacy Information

In 1996 the United States Congress passed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act known now as the HIPAA rules. The initial intent of the bill was to allow employees to change jobs without losing insurance benefits. Revisions of the bill have focused on privacy issues regarding who may have access to your personal health information. New rules governing the sharing of information between health care providers using the internet are long overdue; however HIPAA allows access to confidential information from your chart by FDA and other unspecified government agencies.

In my opinion this constitutes an unacceptable violation of patient-doctor confidentiality and potential access to your records for reasons other than to insure your health. Currently your chart can only be shared with you (as an adult) or either parent (if a minor) and the insurance company responsible for payment. The insurance company occasionally requests copies of a particular visit to ensure a proper level of billing and hopefully an appropriate level of care. Any one else, even other physicians need your written consent to receive your information. This changed when the last stage of HIPAA legislation was enacted April 14, 2003.

To avoid this potential covert invasion of your privacy this office will remain HIPAA exempt which means NO sharing of patient information via e-mail, the internet or other advanced electronic media. Phone calls and faxes remain HIPAA exempt at this time. Insurance companies that require electronic billing, referrals or other electronic contact will be dropped. Fortunately, most plans offer electronic services but do not mandate their use at this time. Authorized signatures will still be required before your information is shared and it will only be shared with those you designate.

Everyone in this office has been educated regarding HIPAA rules and the rules of exemption and will work diligently to protect your privacy. Hopefully that will mean business as usual but may occasionally result in signing more forms or “generic” phone messages. Please direct any questions regarding confidentiality of your medical information to me personally.

Stephen Miles, MD