When a Coworker is a UCM Patient

As a University of Chicago Medicine employee you might find out, either through word of mouth or observation, that a current or former coworker is a UCM patient. Once you become aware of this, you may want to contact or visit the patient to see how he/she is doing out of concern. However, under the laws that govern patient privacy, your first obligation is to respect and protect your coworkers’ privacy. When your coworker is a patient, treat him/her just like any other patient. Your coworker is entitled to and deserves the same privacy and confidentiality that you would give to any other patient.

In order to respect and protect your coworker’s privacy, please follow these guidelines:

1. If you are directly involved in a coworker’s treatment or care (e.g. physician, nurse):
   - Only access protected health information (PHI) related to the reason why you are involved in the coworker’s care.
   - Only share PHI with the treatment team and if the patient has given permission, with the patient’s family/friends.
   - Do not share the information, including the fact that the coworker is a patient, with your family, friends, and other coworkers.

2. If you are not directly involved in the coworker’s treatment or care:
   - Keep any knowledge you might have that the coworker is a UCM patient to yourself
   - Do not share information you may know (e.g. room location, diagnosis) with any other individuals – including your family, friends, and coworkers.
   - Do not access or look at the coworker’s medical record or PHI – even out of concern.
   - Do not stop by to visit the coworker.
   - Do not ask individuals involved in the coworker’s care for information.

Consider the courtesy you would expect in return, if you were a patient you would not want coworkers accessing your medical record, PHI, or discussing your care and medical situation.

Any questions/comments/concerns please feel free to reach out to the Privacy Program at:

773-834-9716 or hpo@bsd.uchicago.edu