

USE OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI) IN PUBLICATIONS

Publishing clinical results, departmental activities, and University of Chicago Medical Center (UCMC) advancements in educational/medical literature, newsletters, and other types of publications is fundamental to the UCMC mission. However, it is important that we use and disclose protected health information (PHI) for these purposes in a HIPAA compliant manner. This guidance applies to publications distributed inside and outside UCMC.

What Information is Covered?

PHI is defined as any information that can lead to the identity of a specific individual. Below are examples of PHI that by themselves constitute PHI and therefore must be protected under HIPAA:

Patient Name	Patient Address	Birth Date
Discharge Date	Date of Death	Admission Date
Telephone Number	Fax Number	Email Address
Social Security Number	Medical Record Number	Health Plan Number
Account Number	Certificate/License Number	Vehicle/License Plate Number
Device Identifier & Serial Number	Diagnosis	Lab Tests/Results
Full face photographic images and any comparable images		

How Can We Use PHI in Publications?

The HIPAA Privacy Rule allows physicians and staff to use and disclose PHI without a patient's written authorization only for purposes related to treatment, payment, and health care operations. The HIPAA Privacy Rule does not allow the use of PHI in publications (*e.g. medical articles, annual reports, newsletters, quality posters, and written case studies, etc*), therefore a patient written authorization is required.

As such, UCMC physicians and staff who want to include PHI in publications may do so, but **must** follow the below guidelines:

1. **Obtain Patient Written Authorization.** The physician, publisher, or marketing department seeks the patient's permission, and the patient signs a HIPAA compliant written authorization – [Education Authorization Form](#) (*the signed authorization form should be maintained in the patient's medical record*). Only the PHI that the patient agrees may be used and that is reflected on the authorization form should be used and disclosed.

Reminders:

- Students must not use PHI in any publication or course work without a valid written signed authorization from the patient.
- Verify that a patient signed authorization is on file before printing the publication.
- UCMC physicians and staff may **not** search UCMC databases or applications (e.g. EPIC, OACIS) to search or "data mine" for interesting patient cases to use in publications. *Contact the HIPAA Program Office to discuss your need to access PHI.*