

Are You a *Typhoid Mary or Tom?*

This is a regular column on issues in the workplace.

You may not be a carrier of Typhoid fever like Mary Mallon, the early 20th century Irish immigrant who infected scores of people with the disease during her working career. But you may be guilty of infecting your co-workers with a cold or flu virus if you come to work sick.

Let's say you have a fever and chills. Your nose is running like a leaky faucet; you have body aches and fatigue plus you have a cough. Do you slog into work? If you have deadlines to meet, you may be tempted to drive in. But is it a smart thing to do?

Arriving at work sick will not endear you to your co-workers, especially if they catch your cold by touching a door knob you've just handled and they rub their eyes or nose. Cold or flu viruses can actually live on a door knob or similar surface for up to 24 hours.

While the thought of work piling up cause apprehension, let common sense



rule. Here are some tips to keep you from spreading or catching someone else's virus:

- If you're sick with a fever, stay home until you're fever-free for at least 24 hours.
- Keep a hand sanitizer at your desk and frequently wash hands with soap and water.
- If you cough or sneeze, remember to cover your mouth with your elbow or arm if tissues are not available. Airborne germs can infect your co-workers.
- Avoid using communal snack jars, as these are breeding grounds for bacteria. Instead, spoon out your portion into individual cups or bowls.
- Regularly clean your work station, e.g., keyboard, mouse, mouse pad, desk and telephone with alcohol wipes.

Remember, rest will help you recover faster and be more productive on the job.

Compliance Corner

Answering your Compliance, Coding, HIPAA Privacy and Security Questions



Fellow Employees,

In this issue we would like to address some recurring questions from staff related to HIPAA Privacy. We hope that by publishing responses to inquiries from the staff at South Nassau, it will help to answer some questions that you may have or assist you with doing your job in the future.

Opt-Out

What is a patient opt-out?

Under HIPAA regulations, a patient has the right to opt out. An opt-out is anytime the patient does not want to be listed in the facility directory. This means that if anyone calls the Switchboard looking for a patient or presents at the Information Desk or Security Desk, the person will be told that there is no patient in the hospital listed by that name.

What are the procedures for an opt-out?

Any patient that wishes to opt out must complete and sign an opt-out form. The opt-out form is then forwarded to the Admitting Office, where this information is entered into the patient accounting system. Providers can also opt patients out

if they feel it is in the patient's best interest. For example, you might want to opt a patient out who is unconscious or otherwise unable to make decisions for himself or herself, if the patient is a victim of abuse or comes into the hospital under police protection.

Where can I find further information on opt-out?

The opt-out policy can be found on the South Nassau Intranet at <http://snch.net> under the "Hospital Policies" section. The opt-out form, patient information sheet and permission form for visitors can be found under the "Forms" section of the Intranet.

Incidental Disclosures

Do big screens mounted in an emergency room displaying patient data violate the HIPAA privacy and security standards?

No, this is not a violation of HIPAA. HIPAA permits the use of these types of screens or boards as long as hospitals take reasonable precautions to minimize disclosure. An example of this would be to position the screens in a way that clinicians can view them while minimizing the exposure of protected

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