

Survey: One in Five Healthcare Workers Would Sell PHI

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They say that everyone has a price, and according to a new survey of healthcare workers—for whom a commitment to patient privacy is sacrosanct—that price is lower than you think.

One in five healthcare workers said they would be willing to sell confidential data to unauthorized parties, according to a new survey from Accenture.¹ Researchers found that about 18 percent of the 912 employees surveyed said they would be willing to sell confidential data to unauthorized parties for as little as \$500. Furthermore, respondents from provider organizations were significantly more likely than those in payer organizations to say they would sell confidential data (21 percent vs. 12 percent).

In such scenarios, respondents would relinquish login credentials, agree to install tracking software, and download data to a portable drive, among other actions, Accenture found.

Perhaps even more alarming, one-quarter (24 percent) of the respondents said they know of someone in their organization who has sold their credentials or access to an unauthorized outsider.

Unfortunately, according to the survey, the frequency of privacy and security training didn't seem to help these startling rates—though the quality of such training was found to have an impact. Cybercrime of this sort has rattled health information management (HIM) professionals and the organizations they work for in recent years. But it's precisely HIM professionals who need to heed the warning about privacy and security training quality.

“Health organizations are in the throes of a cyber war that is being undermined by their own workforce,” says John Schoew, Accenture's managing director of healthcare security, in a press release. “With sensitive data a part of the job for millions of health workers, organizations must foster a cyber culture that addresses these deeply rooted issues so that employees become part of the fight, not a weak link.”

Note

1. Accenture. “One in Five Health Employees Willing to Sell Confidential Data to Unauthorized Parties, Accenture Survey Finds.” Press release. March 1, 2018. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/one-in-five-health-employees-willing-to-sell-confidential-data-to-unauthorized-parties-accenture-survey-finds.htm>.

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