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**WATERBURY HOSPITAL TO STRENGTHEN POLICIES TO COMBAT
MEDICAL IDENTITY THEFT**

Hospital to Implement New Federal Guidelines by May 1

WATERBURY – Identity theft is on the rise in hospitals across the country, according to the American Health Information Management Association. As the economic climate worsens across the Waterbury region and the rest of the country, officials say they are seeing an increasing number of people attempting to obtain medical treatment using someone else’s health insurance information, or creating a false ID to obtain services.

“This is a form of fraud that we, and all health care providers, must be very vigilant against because of the public health implications and the huge costs associated with it,” said Colleen Scott, Chief Financial Officer for Waterbury Hospital. Under new federal guidelines, Scott said the hospital has until May 1 to adopt new measures for ensuring against health insurance-related identity theft.

The Federal Trade Commission has issued a new directive, known as the “Red Flags Rule,” for all entities, including hospitals, which are required to implement a comprehensive identity theft program. “This program not only promotes the awareness of ‘red flags’ that may indicate identity theft, but also goes on to educate staff and the public on the vigilance required to protect peoples’ identities,” Scott said.

The inability to provide positive identification will not hinder a patient’s access to care. However, it is extremely important to understand that every patient has an electronic record which contains pertinent information regarding blood type, allergic reactions and other unique information. Anyone who provides false information in an effort to obtain care puts themselves at risk,.

Waterbury Hospital currently requests photo identification at all registration points. Patient identification at time of registration links a patient directly to their electronic record, meaning serious medical errors can occur if an identity is misrepresented.

Examples of “red flags” include people who share insurance cards; medical records showing treatment that is inconsistent with a patient’s medical history; and patients receiving statements or explanations of benefits for services they did not obtain.

In recent months, Waterbury Hospital has seen several instances of identity theft from patients seeking medical treatment using someone else's health insurance information.

"Your medical record is as unique to you as your fingerprint," Scott said. "We do not want this problem to lead to a serious medical emergency for anyone who comes through our doors."

Waterbury Hospital is developing a board-approved Identity Theft Program which will focus on strengthening current policies regarding patient registration procedures as well as how to detect, prevent and mitigate identity theft.

Waterbury Hospital is the largest private employer in the Greater Waterbury region, and serves a vital role in the economic vitality of Western Connecticut. It is a private, non-profit acute care teaching hospital licensed for 367 beds and affiliated with the Yale School of Medicine, the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Founded in 1890 as Waterbury's first and Connecticut's fourth hospital, Waterbury Hospital is a full-service community health-care institution with centers of excellence in primary care, behavioral health and orthopaedics.

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