

Surviving the Equifax Experience

Like many of you, we have been transfixed as not one but two enormous hurricanes have brought death and destruction to entire states. Our hearts go out to all those who have been affected. But, people are resilient and recover from a hurricane. Roads will be cleared, power will be restored, debris will be collected, and structures will be rebuilt.

Last Friday, another category 5 event occurred that may take us much longer to recover from. Equifax, one of the three large United States credit monitoring companies, announced that it had been hacked and that personal information of 143 million Americans has been compromised. What makes the Equifax situation doubly ominous is that there is no clear path to restore the identity integrity of the affected individuals. People will be given credit monitoring, some will receive new credit cards, many will monitor their finances with renewed care. But there is no mechanism in place to restore the integrity of the millions of identities affected by this breach.

This is an unacceptable situation. At Global Patient Identifiers Inc. (GPII) we believe that the way we manage identities in US Healthcare must change. New capabilities that provide the ability to fully restore an individual's identity integrity must be implemented. This is not possible using the existing demographic data approach to identity management alone. A radically more capable technology with robust error recovery must be added.

GPII has over a decade of experience creating a solution to this problem specifically for healthcare. What is required is a properly designed unique identifier that can be managed by each individual person; an identifier that addresses complex issues like data breaches and patient privacy.

How does the GPII approach to this problem differ from others:

- The solution operates with no personally identifiable information.
- In the event of a data breach, the solution can completely restore an individual's identity integrity going forward in the same way the financial industry does today with a compromised credit card.
- Patients can use the solution to manage the privacy of their information according to their unique needs.
- The solution can be added to a healthcare organization's IT environment with little or no change to existing systems.
- The solution is at least an order of magnitude less expensive than other approaches.
- The solution can benefit from evolving technologies such as biometrics and mobile devices to provide more options for the patient and the provider.
- GPII is a not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to solving this problem in a manner acceptable to all healthcare constituents.

We welcome critical analysis aimed at exploring whether this solution could lead to a qualitative improvement in identity management across United States healthcare. Data breaches will continue. We must be able to respond more effectively.

Please direct questions and comments to bhieb@vuhid.org.

Rob Macmillan, CEO
Barry Hieb, Chief Scientist
Global Patient Identifiers, Inc.
www.gpii.info