



# The Southside Scene

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## HIPAA...Still a Necessary Thorn in Our Sides

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In the Livingston  
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### Quote of the Quarter

“Having fun is  
not a diversion  
from a  
successful life;  
it is the pathway  
to it. ”

Martha Beck  
Sociologist

The next time you are asked to sign the HIPAA paperwork, make sure you do take a look at it. Remember it is actually for your benefit. In our office and most others, HIPAA stands for **H**uge **I**ncrease in **P**aperwork **A**nd **A**nnoyance. But, it is something each office needs to take very seriously!

I received an email the other day from my sister with a question of to whom would she report a HIPAA violation at her primary physician's office. Apparently the office had reported some lab and X-ray results to somebody at her home phone without any discretion for who it was. I informed her of several HIPAA things that she needed to know before she reports any violation. First, she needed to know what paperwork she signed when she signed the HIPAA form at the office. The law requires that she sign an acknowledgement that she was provided the office's Notice of Privacy Practices. These written notices are to be made available to every patient. (Most patients just sign the acknowledgement and say, "Yeah, yeah.") Within this document, the notice informs patients to whom to report any HIPAA violations. In general, the complaint first goes to whoever the HIPAA officer is at that particular office. Then a complaint can be made to the Department of Health and Human Services if higher authorities need to be involved. They are THE "HIPAA Police". The signed acknowledgement may or may not define with whom the office may discuss any of your healthcare information. Some offices include this on the acknowledgement form, some offer a separate form; and others yet just say they will only communicate with the patient unless the patient requests otherwise. Every office satisfies HIPAA requirements differently. No one way is right, as long as the patients' information is maintained as confidential.

At our office, we generally assume that communication should be with the patient only. Frankly, HIPAA can be very trying in a small town. Everybody knows everybody; and so-and-so referred so-and-so; and "has so-and-so come to see you yet?" It is really hard to answer questions such as those because we want to be grateful for the referral, but cannot acknowledge the patient establishment. In many instances, simple socializing might be perceived as a HIPAA violation.

We have actually had some very hairy situations in the office where, although the patient had a family member come with them to the appointment, the patient chose not to have the family member present during the appointment. When the family member asks about the results, we cannot share them, even if it would be exceptionally helpful for others to be familiar with what had been discussed behind closed doors. Unfortunately misinterpretations occur, and misunderstandings abound.

As for my sister, after researching her primary physician's HIPAA practices, and who (if anybody) she authorized to be told any information about her healthcare, it was discovered that the office had violated HIPAA, at least in part. She spoke with the HIPAA officer at the office. Apparently the office was having several complaints about that particular issue and it was being "looked into." ■

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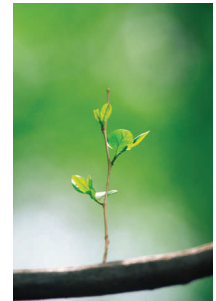
## News You Can Use

If you are an internet user, check out our new web site at [www.southsidehearingcenter.com](http://www.southsidehearingcenter.com) or [www.southsidehearing.com](http://www.southsidehearing.com). You can find our past newsletters there, including the one with the popular article "The Anatomy of a Garden." Be sure to click on our staff's pictures to see our scrapbook pages with our personal pictures and interests.

We have a BIG upcoming 3-day event. It is an Open House for those interested in testing out the new Oticon Dual instrument (if you are not interested in the Dual, or cannot wear it, then whatever is appropriate for you). The event takes place April 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. It is by appointment only, so call for a reservation...243-7690!

Sue will be heading to Dallas for the big convention on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. Last year she was literally too busy having a baby to go to convention.

Yes, Kira will be ONE on April 4<sup>th</sup>. So, when asked "What's up with you?" Sue's typical response is "potty training for Marena (she is doing quite well with the task), Kira teething and starting to walk." Kira has taken a few solo steps, but then gets nervous and drops to crawl. By the time you actually receive this newsletter, she will probably be off and running. ■



*May your  
Spring be filled  
with growth  
and exciting  
new  
beginnings!*



Kira



Marena and Kira



Marena