



# INDIANA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Office of Strategic Communications

Thanks for submitting! Before you publish your post, make sure it doesn't include any patient identifying information that violates HIPAA privacy laws.

**When in doubt, remove any information that may identify a patient! If it is important to a story write about patient information, use composites or change all the details or identifiers and inform readers that the information is a composite or has been changed to protect their patient's privacy.**

## **HIPAA-violating identifiers include:**

1. Names
2. All geographic subdivisions smaller than a state (e.g. street address, city, county, precinct, zip code);
3. All elements of dates (except year) for dates that are directly related to an individual, including but not limited to: date of birth, admission date, discharge date, visit date, death date. You can use age, but all ages over 89 and elements of date including year indicative of such age must be aggregated into age 90 and older.
4. Telephone Numbers
5. Fax Numbers
6. Email addresses
7. Social security numbers
8. Medical record numbers
9. Health plan beneficiary numbers
10. Account numbers
11. Certificate/license numbers
12. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, including license plate numbers
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers
14. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs)
15. Internet Protocol (IP) addresses
16. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints
17. Full-face photographs and any comparable images
18. **Any other unique identifying number, characteristic or code**

## **# 18 can be one of the more difficult elements because it can include anything. Here are a few examples:**

- Peyton Manning is the only five-time MVP for the NFL. So, if you state you saw the NFL's 5X MVP in clinic, that information would be considered identifiable.
- Other unique identifiers might include an illness or disease. Indiana had only 15 cases of West Nile in 2016, so stating they saw a patient with West Nile in clinic this month or year, would be considered identifiable information due to the uniqueness of the illness.
- In 2011 a physician who worked in the ED was fired because she posted information on Facebook about a trauma patient. She posted an x-ray, with no name or other identifiers. However, the patient had been shot by police and the x-ray clearly showed a bullet. It was all over the news that the suspect had been shot by police and taken to her hospital. It was clear to many whose x-ray she had posted. She was terminated and fined by the state medical board