

# Medical Identity Theft - Can The Real Jane Brown Report To The Emergency Room

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In the summer of 2000 I worked for a large hospital as one of their staff Respiratory Therapist. Things had finally slowed down so I took my break and headed to the women's rest room. I open the stall door and there floating in the bottom of the toilet was an empty glass morphine vial and a receipt for the prescription. I immediately contacted the nursing supervisor and eventually the police were called in, as the type of vial that had been dispensed was the type used on the medical floors by the nurses.

The owner of the medical record number was called. A sleepy woman's voice answered the phone (Its was 2 am when the call was made). Jane Brown (not her real name) was asked to come down to the hospital emergency room as her medical record number had been used to get a prescription filled for a controlled substance. They escorted Jane to the pharmacy to have the pharmacist identify her as the woman who had filled the prescription. Turns out that Jane and the woman who claimed to be Jane were not one and the same. Jane was an intensive care nurse for this very hospital and had been at home asleep when her medical record number had been used to pick up the prescription. Jane was given a description of the woman who had impersonated her and she gasped as she realized it was her next-door neighbor. As Jane thought back she remembered that her reminder card for one of her own personal appointments had disappeared from her fridge yet she had thought nothing of it.

Jane's neighbor (we will call her Mary) had not only stolen Jane's appointment reminder card (which had her name and medical record number on it), she had also stolen a few prescription pads from two different hospitals (complete with the doctors information on top) and had then proceeded to write herself out prescriptions for any of the major pain killers that she could get.

You would think that now that they knew who had been impersonating Jane that that would be the end of it, not so. Jane now had to contact each of the hospitals Mary had gone to with documentation to show that the person filling the controlled substance prescriptions was not her. Her medical records had to be pulled to remove the medical complaints and treatment given to Mary while she was impersonating Jane. Jane spent countless hours getting all this straightened out to clear up her good name.

Identity theft. When people hear that word most think of some ones credit card being stolen over the internet or out of their wallet. What many people don't realize is that credit card identity theft only accounts for 28% of all identity crimes being committed. Jane probably would have eventually caught on even if I had not found the vial in the toilet, however that could have only been the result of getting a notice that a medical bill or a prescription bill was being denied. Many people are not aware of medical identity crimes until they either get a bill from a collection agency, a call from their insurance or see it on their credit report. One small preventative that we can all do is not keep medical record information (not even appointment reminder cards) in plain sight of visitors, no matter how much you trust them. Another tool one can use is a good identity theft shield program that will notify you immediately anything is added to your credit report as well as do the restoration work for you. This is a big one, as the sooner you are made aware the sooner damage control can be done.

Thanks for reading  
Stay safe and protected

For more articles on medical identity theft and prevention:

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bal-ambrose0515,0,5443957.column>

<http://www.nbc13.com/nbc13investigators/2057120/detail.html>

<http://www.worldprivacyforum.org/medicalidentitytheft.html>

Tina Fermin is a entrepreneur, gift consultant and Independent Associate with Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc and Identity Theft Shield. Visit <http://www.prepaidlegal.com/hub/tinafermin> or call 801-564-0158 to learn more about how the service can assist you with every day legal situations and protect your identity.