Google Health: A time saver, but privacy slayer?

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Two giants in the online world, Microsoft and Google, have released web-based applications to manage health records. And while these programs could make managing your health records easier, experts wonder about the effect on a patient's privacy and safety.

Laurinda Harman, Ph.D., professor and chair of health information management at Temple University's College of Health Professions, says medical identity theft continues to be a growing problem for patients.

"The crime occurs when someone uses a person's name and sometimes other parts of their identity — such as insurance information — without the person's knowledge or consent to obtain medical services or goods," said Harman, adding that the consequences of someone else using your medical records could be life-threatening.

"If someone were to have a blood transfusion using my name, when I go in to have that same procedure, I could get the wrong blood," she said.

Much like you would continuously check your credit scores and bank statements to prevent financial ID theft, Harman says the same rules apply to medical records.

"It's important for everyone to keep track of their own records, and to really look at their bills to make sure there's nothing suspicious on there."

Source: Temple University

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