

Report on Patient Privacy Volume 20, Number 3. March 12, 2020 Patient Privacy Court Case: March 2020

By Wogai Mohmand

Hackensack Meridian Health Faces Class Action Suit Over Ransomware Attack. On Feb. 10, a proposed class action lawsuit was filed against Hackensack Meridian Health Inc. in the U.S. District Court of New Jersey.^[1] The lawsuit arises out of a December 2019 ransomware attack that plaintiffs allege was the result of the “reckless manner” in which the hospital network maintained patients’ private information.

On Dec. 2, 2019, Hackensack Meridian Health experienced an alleged “IT disruption” that turned out to be a targeted ransomware attack. According to the lawsuit, the attack blocked Hackensack’s access to its computer systems until a ransom was paid. The attack affected the computer networks used by the hospital network for two days, leaving facilities unable to reschedule surgeries and leaving doctors and medical personnel out of patient records. The IT disruption resulted in the rescheduling or delay of up to 100 elective medical procedures. The lawsuit also alleges that the ransomware attack left the Hackensack facilities without the access or ability to deliver lab results or provide patients with medication information. After a few days of disruption, Hackensack paid the attackers a ransom to restore access to their systems.

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