

## Report on Patient Privacy Volume 20, Number 7. July 09, 2020 Privacy Briefs: July 2020

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◆ **Concerns about hacking and online security have fallen since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the fact that the actual risks have risen, according to the 2020 Unisys Security Index report.**<sup>[1]</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) and Interpol have warned of increased cyberattack risk during the pandemic, and estimates indicate there have been as many as 192,000 coronavirus-related cyberattacks globally per week in May 2020 alone, a 30% increase compared to April. Google's Gmail service reported that it saw more than 18 million daily malware and phishing emails related to COVID-19 scams in just one week, and more than 240 million daily spam messages related to COVID-19. However, only 45% of respondents to the global survey said they are concerned about the risk of being scammed during or about a health crisis. "This is worrying given that the vast majority of cyberattacks—98%, by some estimates—deploy social engineering methods (such as phishing), with the WHO reporting a fivefold increase in attacks since the start of the pandemic," the report said. "This blind spot is likely the result of an overconfidence in online protection, and an urgent need to prioritize the most immediate and tangible concerns—namely, instincts toward health and survival—in a situation that shows signs of being 'peak concern' for consumers globally," the report said.

◆ **An Illinois appeal court has ruled that a county in the state no longer must release the names of COVID-19 patients to emergency dispatchers.**<sup>[2]</sup> The ruling by the "2nd District Appellate Court of Illinois reversed an April 10 ruling by McHenry County Judge Michael Chmiel that gave the McHenry County Emergency Telephone System Board access to names and addresses of those who" have tested positive for COVID-19. It "was beyond question that plaintiffs had no right to the information" sought, the names and addresses, Appellate Justice Joseph Birkett wrote in his opinion. He said the health information that was released fell within an exception to HIPAA that permitted but did not require the health department to release it. The health department no longer is providing the patient information to the emergency board system.

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