

## Report on Patient Privacy Volume 20, Number 11. November 05, 2020 Privacy Briefs: November 2020

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By Jane Anderson

◆ **HHS Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology (ONC) is giving health care organizations more time to meet new rules on information blocking and conditions and maintenance of certification requirements.**<sup>[1]</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act mandated the new requirements, and ONC released the final rule on March 9. However, health care organizations have lobbied for an extension, saying the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated their implementation. An interim final rule, which ONC released Oct. 29, extends compliance dates until April 5, 2021, for most parts of the regulations, and for more than a year for certain sections. Don Rucker, national coordinator for health information technology, said “there is strong support for advancing patient access and clinician coordination through the provisions in the final rule, [but] stakeholders also must manage the needs being experienced during the current pandemic...To be clear, ONC is *not* removing the requirements advancing patient access to their health information that are outlined in the Cures Act Final Rule. Rather, we are providing additional time to allow everyone in the health care ecosystem to focus on COVID-19 response.”

◆ **Sonoma Valley Hospital in California said a security incident on Oct. 11 knocked out its computer systems and “triggered a significant downtime event.”**<sup>[2]</sup> The hospital's computer systems had not been fully restored nearly two weeks later, and some patients awaiting test results were repeatedly told to check back. The hospital did not provide any details about the incident, but on Oct. 22, it posted a notice about the systems failure and said it was able to care for patients using its “business continuity plan.”<sup>[3]</sup> The patient portal is accessible to patients, but no new results have been posted since the incident.

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