

## **August 4, 2023 Notice of Privacy Incident at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH)**

*Please see below for notice regarding a privacy incident involving Tableau, a commonly used data analytics tool, which was used at BWH for a certain research study and quality improvement project. Individuals potentially affected by this incident are being mailed notice letters. Since it is possible there may be insufficient contact information for some individuals, this notice is also accessible via BWH's [website](#) consistent with HIPAA. This substitute notice and the toll-free number listed below will remain active for at least 90 days.*

On behalf of Brigham and Women's Hospital ("BWH"), I'm writing to notify you of a recent matter that involved your protected health information which was collected as part of either a research study that you participated in at BWH or a quality improvement project at BWH. As part of our efforts to ensure we are providing the best patient care, we periodically conduct reviews of various processes or workflows and identify opportunities to improve.

The personal information disclosed may have included your name, address, medical record number, date of birth, email address, and phone number. The clinical information disclosed may have included your diagnosis, lab results, medications, and procedures collected as part of the study or project. Not all individuals had the same data involved.

**This matter did not involve access to or release of your Social Security Number, financial account numbers, health insurance information, or debit/credit card numbers.**

During the course of the research study or quality improvement project, graphs were created to illustrate certain information about the study or project to share with others in the healthcare community through the use of the public version of a commonly used data analytics tool called Tableau. These graphs were posted on the internet via the public website for the Tableau tool and were created to provide only high-level and summary information. For the research study, the graphs were posted on the public version of the Tableau tool on February 25, 2018. For the quality improvement project, the graphs were posted on the public version of the Tableau tool on January 14, 2023.

On June 8, 2023, we learned that these graphs inadvertently included a publicly accessible link to some personal and health information, as described above, that was collected in connection with the study or project. We immediately conducted a review and promptly had the graphs and link removed on June 13, 2023. However, we are writing to notify you that the link regarding the research study was publicly accessible between February 25, 2018 – June 13, 2023, and the link regarding the quality improvement project was publicly accessible between January 14, 2023 – June 13, 2023.

We do not believe that you need to take any specific steps in response to this matter. That said, we are enclosing a list of various proactive steps that individuals can take to protect their personal and health information, generally, for your reference.

We are fully committed to protecting the information entrusted to us and we sincerely regret that your information was accidentally available via this public website for this period of time. BWH has taken several steps to mitigate and help prevent incidents like this from occurring in the future, including conducting a review when we discovered the matter and providing privacy and security reminders regarding the use of this tool.

If you have any questions or would like further information about this matter, please contact our Privacy Office toll free at 833-294-2020 or 617-582-5201 during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST,

Monday through Friday, or by email at [bwhcHIPAA@partners.org](mailto:bwhcHIPAA@partners.org). We regret any concern or inconvenience this may cause you and will make every effort to address any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Debra Torosian  
The Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc.  
Privacy Officer

### **STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO PROTECT YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION**

Review Your Account Statements. Carefully review statements sent to you from healthcare providers as well as from your insurance company to ensure that all of your account activity is valid. Report any questionable charges promptly to the provider or company with which you maintain the account.

Provide any updated personal information to your health care provider. Your health care provider's office will ask to see a photo ID to verify your identity. Please bring a photo ID with you to every appointment if possible. Your provider's office will also ask you to confirm your date of birth, address, telephone, and other pertinent information so that we can make sure that all of your information is up-to-date. Please be sure and tell your provider's office when there are any changes to your information. Carefully reviewing this information with your provider's office at each visit helps us to avoid problems, and address them quickly should there be any discrepancies.

Consult the Federal Trade Commission. For more guidance on general steps you can take to protect your information, you also can contact the Federal Trade Commission:

Website: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/privacy-identity-online-security>

Postal Address: Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Telephone: (202) 326-2222