

THE ADVISOR

MONTHLY COMPLIANCE COMMUNICATOR

SSA Acquires Total Medical Compliance, Creating New Compliance Training Division

Total Medical Compliance (TMC), a recognized leader in healthcare compliance training for OSHA, HIPAA, and more, is now joining forces with Scientific Safety Alliance (SSA). This marks SSA's first strategic expansion into the compliance training space. Through this partnership, TMC will serve as the cornerstone of SSA's new compliance training segment, combining TMC's deep expertise in healthcare focused education with SSA's broader service platform.

By embedding TMC's services into SSA's portfolio, the combined organization aims to deliver a unified, end-to-end compliance solution for healthcare providers, dental practices, and other regulated healthcare organizations.

"We are extremely excited about our fit into SSA's future plans. With SSA's background in the service industry, and our position in the healthcare compliance market, the result will be unmatched! TMC is excited to partner with a company that shares the same strong values of client respect and high quality." said Bill Fivek, President of TMC.

SSA, known for services including controlled environment certification and lab and medical equipment calibration, inspection, and repair, will leverage this partnership to broaden its service offering for health and science customers.

"TMC is a perfect strategic fit for SSA's ongoing expansion into additional offerings that will allow us to better serve our customers," said Adam Waller, VP of Strategy at Scientific Safety Alliance. "Their expertise in healthcare compliance complements our existing technical services and positions SSA to deliver a more integrated platform that supports our clients' regulatory and operational needs."

Newsletter Content

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About SSA

SSA is a 100% founder and employee-owned scientific safety provider to over 10,000 medical device, pharmaceutical, research, and healthcare facilities across the United States. SSA is building a category-redefining service partner that helps science run without interruption by empowering frontline talent and challenging every process to deliver peace of mind. The company was recently recognized as the 467th fastest growing privately held company in the USA. We provide a better alternative for owners than selling to private equity or private-equity-backed companies by offering a people-first approach.

HIPAA Reminder: Cadia Healthcare Settles OCR Investigation Over Unauthorized PHI Disclosures

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through its Office for Civil Rights (OCR), recently announced a settlement with five healthcare providers collectively known as Cadia Healthcare Facilities. This settlement resolves potential violations of the HIPAA Privacy and Breach Notification Rules. Cadia Healthcare provides rehabilitation, skilled nursing, and long-term care services in Delaware.

What Happened

OCR opened an investigation after a complaint in September 2021 alleged that Cadia Healthcare had publicly shared a patient's name, photograph, and detailed treatment information as part of a "success story" on its website. OCR confirmed that the PHI of 150 patients had been posted online without valid, written HIPAA authorizations.

This violated the HIPAA Privacy Rule, which sets national standards to safeguard individuals' PHI. Sharing patient stories online without consent exceeded what is permitted, and Cadia Healthcare also failed to implement appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards. Additionally, the facility did not notify affected individuals as required under the HIPAA Breach Notification Rule.

The Consequences

- Under the resolution agreement, Cadia Healthcare Facilities agreed to:
- Pay \$182,000 to OCR.
- Implement a two-year corrective action plan monitored by OCR.
- Review and update written HIPAA policies and procedures.
- Train all workforce members, including marketing personnel, on HIPAA compliance.
- Notify all individuals whose PHI was disclosed without authorization.

OCR Director Paula M. Stannard emphasized that social media and websites can be valuable for business promotion, but HIPAA-covered entities must ensure patient authorization before disclosing PHI. Without proper consent, even a seemingly simple marketing post can become a serious violation.

Lessons Learned

The Cadia Healthcare case highlights several critical lessons for healthcare providers and business associates:

1. Always Obtain Written Authorization – Patients must provide valid, written consent before their PHI can be used in testimonials or online stories.
2. Limit PHI Disclosures – Only share the minimum necessary information. Avoid including full names, photos, or detailed medical data unless specifically authorized.
3. Implement Strong Safeguards – Protect PHI with proper administrative, technical, and physical measures, including secure storage and controlled website access.
4. Train Your Workforce – Ensure all staff, especially marketing and communications personnel, understand HIPAA rules and organizational policies.
5. Respond Promptly to Breaches – Follow breach notification procedures immediately if PHI is shared without authorization.

HIPAA compliance protects both patients and healthcare providers. Cadia Healthcare's experience is a reminder that sharing patient stories online may seem harmless, but without proper authorization, it can lead to regulatory penalties, financial consequences, and reputational damage. Reviewing online marketing practices, training staff, and following HIPAA rules ensure patient trust is maintained while staying compliant.

HIPAA Compliance Quick Checklist: Sharing Patient Stories Online

- ☐ Obtain Written Authorization
 - Never post patient names, photos, or medical details without a signed HIPAA authorization.
 - Authorization must clearly state what information can be shared, where, and for how long.
- ☐ Follow Minimum Necessary Rule
 - Share only the information needed for the intended purpose. Avoid unnecessary identifiers or medical details.
- ☐ Implement Safeguards
 - Use strong access controls for websites and social media accounts.
 - Secure PHI in both digital and physical formats.
 - Define who is authorized to access and share PHI.
- ☐ Train Your Workforce
 - Include marketing, social media, and communications staff in HIPAA training.
 - Reinforce policies on proper use and disclosure of PHI.
- ☐ Respond Promptly to Breaches
 - Follow breach notification procedures immediately if PHI is disclosed without authorization.
 - Notify affected individuals and implement corrective actions.

Tip: When in doubt, don't post it. Always confirm authorization before sharing any PHI publicly.

Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

As we move through November and December, shorter days, cooler temperatures, and unpredictable weather bring a new set of safety challenges. One of the most common challenges involves slips, trips, and falls. While these incidents might seem minor, they remain one of the leading causes of workplace injuries, responsible for thousands of lost workdays, medical costs, and disruptions every year.

The good news is that most of these incidents are entirely preventable. Through awareness, teamwork, and consistent safety habits, we can mitigate risks and foster a workplace culture where everyone goes home safely at the end of the day.

Most slip, trip, and fall incidents are not the result of unusual hazards, but rather everyday oversights — simple things that can easily be corrected with a bit of care and attention. Common contributing factors include:

- Wet, oily, or icy floors caused by spills, weather, or leaks
- Uneven surfaces or damaged flooring that catch shoes or wheels
- Cords, boxes, or tools left in walkways, creating unexpected obstacles
- Poor lighting that hides hazards or changes in elevation
- Rushing or multitasking while walking, especially when distracted by phones or carrying materials
- Wearing footwear without proper traction or support

Building a safer workplace starts with every individual's attention and action. Here are practical steps everyone can take to reduce risks:

1. Keep floors clean and dry.
 - Clean up spills immediately, place wet floor signage in visible areas, and avoid blocking drainage paths. If you notice a persistent leak or slippery area, report it so it can be fixed properly.
2. Stay alert and move mindfully.
 - Avoid distractions like texting while walking. Take your time, especially when using stairs or carrying objects that limit your view. Slow, deliberate movement prevents rushed missteps.
3. Maintain good lighting.
 - Check that all bulbs and fixtures in high-traffic areas are working. Adequate lighting helps everyone see and avoid hazards before they become a problem.
4. Wear the right footwear.
 - Choose shoes designed for your environment — slip-resistant soles for wet or outdoor areas, and weather-appropriate footwear during rain, frost, or snow. Good traction can make all the difference.
5. Be weather-wise.
 - November and December often brings slick walkways, damp entrances, and icy patches. Use designated paths, take shorter steps on slippery surfaces, and wipe your shoes when entering buildings. If you spot ice or water buildup, report it immediately.

Supervisors and managers also play a key role by setting the tone for safety:

- Conduct regular inspections of walkways and entrances.
- Encourage employees to speak up about hazards.
- Provide ongoing reminders during safety meetings.
- Recognize and appreciate proactive safety behavior.

As the days get shorter and the weather changes, take a few extra moments to watch your step, tidy your workspace, and report potential risks.

Stop These Infection Control Breaches Before They Lead to Outbreaks

Infection control breaches can result in the transmission of infectious agents, particularly bloodborne pathogens. These breaches are situations when established procedures are not followed, thus potentially placing patients and healthcare workers at risk.

A few common infection control breaches found in healthcare facilities, including dental healthcare facilities, are:

- unsafe injection practices
- failure to monitor sterilization equipment
- lapses in hand hygiene,
- lapses in use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- reuse of single use devices

Unsafe injection practices include reusing syringes or needles on more than one patient. It also includes using a syringe to access a medication vial that is then used on multiple patients. Cases like these have resulted in documented transmission of bloodborne pathogens.

Two common myths with unsafe injection practices are that changing the needle makes a syringe safe for reuse and that leftover medication in a single use vial is safe to reuse on additional patients. Once a needle and syringe are used, they are considered contaminated and must be discarded. A new needle and syringe must be used for each entry into a medication vial and for each injection. Single use vials of medication are just that – single use! They do not contain antimicrobial preservatives and therefore can only be used once.

Sadly, the reuse of single use devices, also called disposable devices, is common. Reusing items that are labeled single use increases the risk of transmitting infections. Single use devices must be used for only one patient during a single procedure. Items that are single use are intended to be discarded after use and NOT reprocessed. Any item that does not have instructions for reprocessing are single use. Examples of single use items in healthcare are syringes, needles, gloves, masks, bandages, wraps, catheters, surgical blades, and certain retractors. Examples in dentistry are irrigating syringes, certain burs, needles, masks, gloves, saliva ejectors, and high-volume suctions. Single use items are made from materials not designed for heat sterilization nor can they be cleaned properly thus making them single use.

Failure to monitor sterilization equipment is another significant infection control breach. Autoclaves must be monitored utilizing physical, chemical, and biological indicators. Physical indicators include observing and documenting the time, temperature, and pressure of the autoclave. This ensures that the parameters for sterilization have been met. Chemical indicators are indicators that will result in a change to one or more of the conditions within the sterilizing chamber. These are used to detect sterilizer malfunction or failures resulting from human error, deficiencies of the sterilizing agent, or malfunction of the machine. The chemical indicator will undergo a change of color when the parameters for sterilization are present. Chemical indicators do not validate sterilization; they are a way to detect potential sterilization failure. Biological indicators, commonly referred to as spore test, are the only way to verify sterilization. Spore testing must be done at least weekly and with each implantable device. These tests are available in vials or strips. You can use a mail-in system or in-house incubators.

Hand hygiene and proper use of PPE are critical to reduce the spread of infection. Hand hygiene is the single most critical measure to reduce the spread of organisms to your patients and to each other. In hospitals, improper or not performing hand hygiene has resulted in outbreaks of infections. Studies have shown a low adherence to hand hygiene, with an adherence rate of less than 40%. Some of the most frequent reasons given for the lack of hand hygiene among healthcare personnel are:

- that products are inaccessible,
- the products cause skin irritation,
- healthcare providers are too busy to perform hand hygiene,
- it interfered with patient care,
- workers were wearing gloves and felt hands were not contaminated,
- they just didn't think about it,
- they lacked the knowledge of when and how to perform hand hygiene

Remember, clean hands are an important defense against spreading infections.

Inconsistent use of PPE is another common infection control breach. PPE is used to protect the clothing and skin of healthcare workers. The selection of PPE must be made based on the potential exposure risk during each procedure. Healthcare workers, including dental healthcare workers, must ensure proper use of PPE for each exposure risk and each procedure performed. Improper use of PPE can facilitate the spread of infection between patients and workers.

Infection control breaches must be identified immediately and action taken to correct the breach. In some cases, consultations with infection preventionist and health authorities must take place. Notification and testing of patients may be a result of these breaches. Following standard precautions and your facilities standard operating procedures will ensure a safe, healthy environment for patients and healthcare professionals.

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Instructions

Print and post newsletter in office for staff review. Each member should sign this form when completed. Keep on file as proof of training on these topics.

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