Why Staff Training is So Important



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Fox 11 Los Angeles, the Santa Barbara Independent and other news outlets recently reported that several health care workers at an urgent care facility operated by Sutter Health were fired after posting a "dehumanizing" TikTok about patient bodily fluids left behind on exam table paper coverings. Responding posters added photos and remarks about marks and stains left behind by patients. Sutter Health was quick to respond, stating "Sutter Health has terminated the employees responsible for the inappropriate and insensitive photos posted on social media. This unacceptable behavior is an outright violation of our policies, shows a lack of respect for our patients and will not be tolerated." What is interesting about this incident is that, although no protected health information about any specific patient was revealed and none of the photos showed any patient in the images, staff were nonetheless fired for what was deemed inappropriate and insensitive conduct that violates patient trust. One takeaway from this incident is that HIPAA training should include social media use and the need to avoid any posts relating to patient care, whether or not the poster believes specific patient information was omitted from such posts.

If you need assistance with your HIPAA compliance program, an OCR investigation, or a data breach incident, please contact:
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