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## Privacy Rights Survive a Patient's Death

It is important for your staff to know that patient privacy survives death. With the recent news of several celebrity deaths, multiple health care providers have been interviewed by the media and have openly discussed the individual's medical condition and the types of medications requested or used by each celebrity.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the federal patient privacy regulation, **applies to all health care providers, nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, and all medical staff, and its privacy protection mandates continue after a patient's death.**

**Only the executor or a named beneficiary is legally authorized to act on behalf of the deceased patient or request the deceased's records.** However, records may be requested and obtained by some law enforcement and government authorities, including the coroner, when the cause of death is under investigation.

All patients - celebrities or not - have a right to privacy when it comes to their health care. Please take a moment to remind your staff about HIPAA's requirements in this regard.

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