FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

On September 13, 2021, staff at Community Eye Clinic in Fort Worth, managed by the University of Houston College of Optometry, became aware that the clinic database containing patient records had been accessed by an unauthorized third party from outside the United States.

The patient records dated from May 22, 2013 to September 13, 2021, and include health information, contact information and other sensitive personal information, including insurance information and government identification numbers, such as passport numbers, social security numbers and driver’s license information. The information did not include credit card, debit card, or other financial information.

The following FAQs provide additional information for Community Eye Clinic patients who received a letter from Community Eye Clinic and the University of Houston College of Optometry as well as those patients who did not receive a letter due to an address change or other reason(s) but learned about the incident from other sources.

Q. I received a letter from Community Eye Clinic and the University of Houston College of Optometry about a computer security incident. What happened?

A. At approximately 9:00 am on September 13, 2021, UH College of Optometry personnel discovered the Community Eye Clinic’s computer database had been accessed by an unauthorized individual/entity originating from outside the United States. After discovering the breach, College of Optometry Information Technology staff and University of Houston Information Security staff immediately implemented additional safeguards and enhanced alerting, supplementing protective measures already in place. The Clinic’s file backup strategy enabled the Clinic to retain access to all patient records, including those impacted by the incident. University of Houston Information Security also promptly reported the incident to local and federal law enforcement personnel.

Q. How could a situation like this happen?

A. Even with appropriate safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized access, professional hackers still may uncover ways to penetrate computer systems and data. The University of Houston and the College of Optometry take privacy issues regarding health information and other sensitive personal data very seriously and are engaged in a focused review of the clinic’s information technology protocols and other procedures to ensure that the most effective industry security practices have been implemented.
Q. Who does this incident affect?

A. This incident only affects patients who were seen at Community Eye Clinic in Fort Worth between May 22, 2013 and September 13, 2021.

Q. Were patients from the University Eye Institute or other external eye clinics affected?

A. No. This incident only affects patients who were seen at Community Eye Clinic in Fort Worth between May 22, 2013 and September 13, 2021. No other clinic’s patient records were on the database computer at Community Eye Clinic.

Q. Were College of Optometry or University of Houston network systems affected by this computer security incident?

A. No. This incident was limited to the system at Community Eye Clinic. No other College of Optometry or University of Houston network systems were affected.

Q. I heard about the incident at Community Eye Clinic in the news. Why didn’t I get a letter?

A. There could be several reasons you did not get a letter:

i) We sent the letters using the contact information we had available. Some patient records contained incomplete address information, and we were unable to send letters to those patients. Some patients have moved since they were last seen at Community Eye Clinic, and updated address information was not provided to the clinic. We released a news alert to try to reach those for whom we did not have accurate addresses. Copies of the letters are available at https://www.opt.uh.edu and https://www.facebook.com/CommunityEyeClinicFortWorth/.

ii) This incident only affects patients seen at Community Eye Clinic up to September 13, 2021. If you were not seen at Community Eye Clinic during that time period, your records were not in the database that was accessed. If you were seen at another eye clinic, and not at Community Eye Clinic, your records were not in the database that was accessed.

Q. If Community Eye Clinic learned of this on September 13, 2021, why wasn’t I notified sooner?

A. The University of Houston has procedures designed to secure its computer systems, investigate security incidents, notify affected individuals in accordance with applicable laws and university
policy, and improve security in any affected areas. Since becoming aware of this incident, College of Optometry Information Technology staff and University of Houston Information Security staff have taken steps to supplement the protective measures in place when the incident occurred. Specifically, an extensive IT investigation was conducted, additional safeguards and enhanced alerting were put in place to further protect the data and prevent future incidents, and notification processes were undertaken, including drafting and sending appropriate communications to patients and others. The University of Houston will continue to monitor the situation to learn about any problems that may arise.

Q. **What personal information was involved?**

A. The content of each patient’s record varies, but the records typically contain diagnosis and treatment information, vision test results, letters to/from primary care and referring doctors, medical and vision history information, current medications, and family medical history. The patient records typically also included information regarding patient name, address, phone number(s), date of birth, sex, languages spoken, occupation or job, insurance information and insurance identification numbers, employee identification numbers, cost of service or goods purchased, method of payment, and future appointments. Information in the patient records also included scanned documents containing government identification numbers, such as passport numbers, social security numbers and driver’s license information. No credit or debit card or other bank information was stored in the database or contained in the information that was accessed.

Q. **How do I know what information of mine was involved?**

A. Since each patient record is unique, it is not possible to specifically describe here what information of yours was involved. We also could not verify whether all patients were impacted by the incident. If you would like a copy of your patient record you may request one in writing from:

Community Eye Clinic
655 Taylor Street
Fort Worth, TX 76102
(Ph.): 817.289.6800

Q. **Will I be a victim of identity theft as a result of this incident?**

A. Given the information that was accessed, it is important that you are aware of the potential risks. Therefore, we encourage you to take appropriate precautions to protect yourself against possible...
identify theft, including the following steps:

- Review and monitor your account statements for suspicious or unauthorized activity.

- Order a free credit report, check it carefully, and continue to monitor your credit reports. If you note any irregularities, you should follow the steps recommended by a credit bureau. You can find credit bureau information on the next page of this letter.

- Consider placing a free fraud alert or security freeze on your credit reports through credit bureaus such as Experian, Equifax, and/or Transunion.


Q. What should I do if I do become a victim of identity theft?

A. The Federal Trade Commission and the Texas Attorney General’s Office have websites dedicated to assisting victims of identity theft. These websites identify specific steps for victims to take and provide a “toolkit” for victims to use, in both English and Spanish.


Q. Will Community Eye Clinic or the College of Optometry contact me to ask for private information because of this event?

A. No. Therefore, please be cautious if any individuals claiming to represent the Community Eye Clinic or the College of Optometry contact you and ask for personal information, including Social Security or other government issued numbers, and/or debit or credit card information. Please know that we will not ask for these numbers. We will not ask for any credit card or bank information. We recommend that you do not release personal information in response to any contacts of this nature that you have not initiated.
Q. What steps are Community Eye Clinic and the College of Optometry taking to prevent this from happening again?

A. University of Houston and College of Optometry Information Technology personnel implemented immediate network and system configuration changes to further protect the patient record information. These actions include additional defensive safeguards and enhanced alerting to prevent future incidents. The University is reviewing the clinic’s information technology protocols and other procedures to ensure that the most effective industry security practices have been implemented. The University of Houston and the College of Optometry take privacy issues regarding health information and other personal data very seriously and are engaged in a careful review of the clinic’s information technology protocols and other procedures to ensure that the most effective industry security practices are consistently followed.

Q. Whom should I contact if I have any additional questions concerning this security breach?

A. If you have questions regarding this incident, please do not hesitate to contact the following toll-free number established for Community Eye Clinic, 1 (833) 602-2108 or via email at ueiadmin@Central.uh.edu.