

THE PRIVATE PATIENT PART II

Second of a Series

BY GRANT HALL

Editors Note:

In an effort to provide readers with educational information, Grant Hall, author of [Privacy Crisis: Identity Theft Prevention Plan and Guide to Anonymous Living](#) provides an actual case history of his efforts to shield himself from identity theft and other privacy invasions. The following article is based on true events with certain amendments included for privacy reasons.

Following two days of travel, my right knee began swelling for no apparent reason. Ice packs day and night made no difference and after another week of stiffness, I was concerned. Could it be more than a simple case of bursitis? I began shopping for remedies after reading articles on the subject. My memory was refreshed as I knew the drill: Aspiration if it gets too large, but no known cure for it. Another three or four days passed and the swelling increased to the size of a football.

More than a little concerned, eleven hundred miles away from home and without the slightest idea of who to call, I spent a morning on the telephone researching orthopedic surgeons. Calls to the medical licensing board, two medical associations, a half dozen university offices and three calls to other medical practitioners, yielded names, a couple of recommendations and

information for further research. By the end of the morning, I had three candidates. Doctor number one was not accepting new patients. Calls to the second office went unanswered for a time. Five minutes later, they picked up, placed me on hold and left me there. On to number three I went. “He can see you a week from today,” said Mrs. Z, office supervisor. I explained I had a football knee now the size of a football and she scheduled me for an hour after the market’s close.

“Insurance card and picture I.D. Fill these out and have a seat. He’s running late,” snapped the thirty-something, front office clerk as she continued speaking on the telephone in Spanish. “I’ll wait until you’re through on the phone,” I replied.

Six minutes later she was done with the personal call. I stood up.

“Now what’s the problem?” Her eyes narrowed. I took the three page form, spent five minutes filling it out and handed it back without identification. She wanted a birth date. I had provided my age on the form without the date of birth. “No,” I said. She wanted a Social Security number. “No,” I said. She said the doctor would not see me without both. I said I believed he would. Supervisor Z was called.

I don’t argue about secure data bases, trustworthy employees or insurance company verification procedures. And within two minutes and four sentences, both understood my requirements. On to the X-Ray room, I went.

Ms. X-Ray tech was tall, wore a short skirt, an engagement ring on her middle finger and seemed pleasant enough. The hard part was positioning the bloated knee on the X-Ray table. She explained the pictures would be ready in ninety seconds. I waited for Doc in the examination room. Then she reappeared wanting my date of birth for the X-Ray records. “No.” It’s a powerful word. X-Ray tech’s mouth closed, she reddened and asked again. “No.” She turned to leave then came back. “We need it for our files,” she said. She bristled. “There are no exceptions,” I stated. I began reading again.

Dr. Jack walked slowly into the room. Based on my research, I expected he’d be over seventy and he was. He sat down. No gowns, scales, stethoscopes, personal questions or probing or prodding. Just a glance at the double-sized knee in cut offs told him all he needed to know. “You’re right. It’s bursitis. I can drain it. It will probably come back. Swelling indicates no infection.” I had chosen well. True experts are paid for what they know, not what they do. He knew.

We talked and talked. We knew some of the same people. I realized how lucky I was when he brought up a couple of names. Athletes of the past, we both knew were now medical case studies. I felt lucky after our talk.

Ms. Front office itemized the bill, provided the nomenclature information just in case my deductible is met and I have to file a claim someday. I paid her and left knowing my personal data would not be invaded by future part-timers who occupy her desk

and snap at new patients in an attempt to make their lives vulnerable to the fastest growing fraud crime for the seventh straight year, identity theft.

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