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**PUBLISHER** Lisa Banket

**EDITOR** Taren Grom

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR** Marah Walsh

**SENIOR EDITORS**

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Carolyn Gretton

**DESIGN ASSOCIATE**

Ariel Medel

**NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER**

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**NATIONAL ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE**

Amy Bishop

**WEBCAST NETWORK PRODUCER**

Daniel Limbach

**CIRCULATION ASSISTANT**

Kathy Deiuliis

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## Letters...

Send your letters to feedback@pharmavoice.com. Please include your name, title, company, and business phone number. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity. All submissions become the property of PharmaLinX LLC.

## Password protected?

How secure is your healthcare and other online data? Well, across the globe it's clear that healthcare information continues to be fertile ground for cybercriminals. According to HIPAA Journal, there was a 40.63% increase in reported data breaches of 500 or more healthcare records in February 2021. Additionally, 45 data breaches were reported to the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights by healthcare providers, health plans, and their business associates in February, the majority of which were hacking incidents.



In broader context, according to ForgeRock, data breaches and malicious attacks continue to grow as organizations recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of these breaches extends beyond the bottom line.

In this month's cover story, our community of experts weigh in on the consequences of data privacy and protecting patients and their data, as well as employee data.

Scott Taylor, chief privacy officer in Merck's Ethics & Compliance Office, agrees that the data privacy field has been going through unprecedented challenges. "Globalization, coupled with greater computing power, advanced analytics and algorithms, observational data, and more ubiquitous data sharing due to digital ecosystems, has not only strained traditional tenets of privacy laws and regulations, but has resulted in an overall erosion of trust among many data subjects," he says.

Unfortunately, this loss of trust couldn't come at a worse time, given the complications of COVID-19. Patients and organizations alike need to trust that their information is secure.

According to ForgeRock, the healthcare industry was the most targeted, accounting for 43% of breaches. Medical details were the most targeted data type in first quarter 2020, accounting for 25% of breaches. Healthcare also presents unique challenges due to the extent of sensitive data being shared in the complex and multi-partner clinical process. For example, ForgeRock reports last year the U.K.'s NHS blocked nearly 12,000 phishing attacks a day.

ForgeRock analysts say part of the increase in data breaches is because consumers are leveraging their digital identity more than ever for online activities to maintain their daily lives, for everything from remote access to work applications to ordering groceries or takeout delivery. ForgeRock estimates that U.S. breaches cost more than \$1.8 trillion with more than 7.8 billion consumer records exposed over the last two years.

Alpesh Patel, chief technology officer at Orbita, notes a major element of the COVID-19 pandemic has involved the rapid transition in work settings from physical offices to remote, work-from-home environments. "The percentage of employees working from home has increased from 33% to 61% throughout the pandemic," he says. "This has required significant changes to accommodate the new normal and highlights the need for many organizations to reevaluate how their data is protected and close any existing security gaps."

I, for one, am changing my security protocols, and will scrap the sticky note on my computer with all my passwords. How about you?

Taren Grom  
Editor

## Their word...

**ROBIN ROBINSON**

Senior Editor



*During the pandemic, drug makers forged ahead and faced the challenges and gained the benefits of virtual launches.*

**KIM RIBBINK**

Senior Editor



*Women are leading the way in the pharmaceutical industry and we are delighted to showcase some incredible leaders in their fields.*

**CAROLYN GRETTON**

Features Editor



*As we give digital devices more of our health information, and third-party companies gain more access to that data, there needs to be an evolution in existing data privacy regulations to better protect that information.*

## Coming in May

- ▶ Modernizing Media Strategies
- ▶ Healthcare Businesswomen's Association's Rising Stars and Luminaries
- ▶ Patient Recruitment
- ▶ Medical Education
- ▶ Chief Creative Officers
- ▶ Showcase: Brand Building Connected & IoT Health