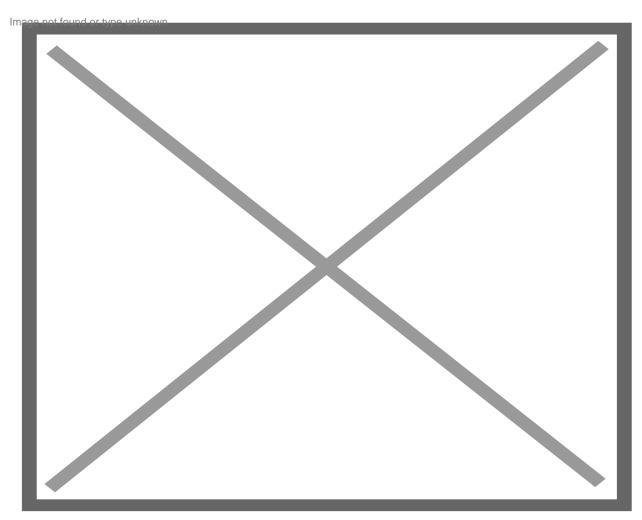# Virgin Islanders Grow Frustrated With Lack of Access to Medical Records Following SRMC Ransomware Attack

Patients left in limbo as hospital remains silent on the extent of data compromise; residents express frustration over lack of access to critical medical information

Exclusive / **Published On September 19, 2024 04:55 AM /**

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The Schneider Regional Medical Center in St. Thomas, USVI. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Almost two months after a ransomware group held its data hostage, the Schneider Regional Medical Center seems to be struggling to provide patients with access to their own medical records.?

On July 21, officials of the Schneider Regional Medical Center confirmed that the healthcare facility had been the victim of a ransomware attack. "We regret to inform our patients that access to the patient portal is currently unavailable, and copies of your medical records will not be available until the system is restored," a press release about the attack stated. "We are committed to remediating the situation as quickly as possible," the statement continued. "At this time, we cannot confirm the extent of any compromised patient health or financial information."

On August 12, Consortium journalists sought an update from SRMC officials, and were directed to the original announcement of July 22 and an update dated August 7. In a letter addressed to Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, Schneider Regional CEO Tina Comissiong said that the hospital network had been "rebuilt using best practices" and that their Electronic Health Records (EHR) system had been reviewed and was being tested starting the next day, August 8. Once the initial testing was complete, the letter indicated that the "Admitting and HR departments will be given access, followed by a systematic rollout to other departments."

With no updates to the public in intervening weeks, Virgin Islanders have been left to speculate on the progress hospital officials have been making on restoring access to those records that have been made inaccessible by the attack. Over two months since the ransomware hack, residents still do not know whether malicious actors were able to obtain confidential medical records among the data that was compromised in the attack. Several attempts by Consortium journalists to contact Ms. Comissiong or Brandon Richardson, Schneider Regional's Vice President of Information Systems, have thus far proved unsuccessful.

Apart from silence over exactly how the system was compromised and what data was affected, Schneider Regional has reportedly offered little assistance to those who require access to their medical records in order to seek care elsewhere, leaving several Virgin Islanders in limbo.

"I came to the hospital at least three times to get my medical records and hospital bill because I'm trying to seek help elsewhere," said a police officer who spoke to the Consortium last month out of frustration. "Every time I come, they're telling me the system is down, the system is down," said the woman, who asked that we not use her name for privacy reasons.

She said it wasn't until she made contact with an acquaintance who worked inside the hospital that she discovered that SMRC had been the victim of a cyberattack. "People are coming in here angry, they're cursing – why are you not telling us what is going on?"

The woman, who recently suffered the tragic loss of a family member, says that she is still unable to obtain an autopsy report due to the hospital's ongoing inability to access its files. "It's very frustrating."?

As of press time, the patient portal link on Schneider Regional's website remained offline. The last outreach to SRMC officials, made on Wednesday, resulted in the promise of a call back from Mr. Richardson.