



BOILING POINT

SYRACUSE MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH ADRIAN AUTRY COULD NOT MASK HIS FRUSTRATION FOLLOWING THE ORANGE'S ERROR-PRONE LOSS TO VIRGINIA TECH. **B1**

HEALTH CARE

Can your health records be sold for profit?



Shutterstock

In a lawsuit, Epic Systems claims 300,000 people's digital health information records were accessed.

Daniel Gilbert Washington Post

On the digital superhighway that allows sensitive patient health records to be shared by hospitals and doctors, something seemed off to engineers at Epic Systems: Among the providers with access to the network were names that sounded like law firms.

That observation in 2022 led to an investigation into what Epic, the nation's largest vendor of electronic health record software, alleges are "organized syndicates" that fraudulently obtained access to nearly 300,000 patient records without their consent, in many cases marketing them to lawyers to allegedly mine for prospective clients.

Epic's disclosures offer a rare glimpse into the unseen workings of how your personal medical records move from one network to another, who has access to them, and where there may be gaps that allow medical privacy to be breached and sensitive information exploited for commercial gain.

If bad actors' access isn't curtailed, Epic argues in a lawsuit it filed last week, the via-

Health Gorilla broadly denied the allegations, calling them "yet another example of Epic's exclusionary actions that limit competition and restrict access to healthcare data."

bility of the U.S. system for sharing health records is threatened. Some of the firms targeted by Epic contend they were performing legitimate services for patients that complied with federal privacy requirements, and they accuse Epic of acting in bad faith.

The networks for sharing identifiable patient records operate similarly to those for cellphones. Just as someone with an AT&T plan can call a friend on a Verizon plan, one medical practice can send medical records electronically to another that uses different software on an "interoperability frame-

work." That makes it possible for physicians in an emergency room to pull up the medical history of a patient they've never seen before.

Epic says bad actors disguise themselves as health care providers to access patient records, when they really are catering to law firms seeking people with particular diagnoses or health conditions to join class actions. A firm called Integritort was added to a network as offering treatment, though as Epic and its co-plaintiffs point out, the "tort" in its name suggests a legal rather than health care purpose.

The lawsuit cites a video of an Integritort sales pitch to a business generating leads for law firms, in which the company obtained "in real time, an audience member's sensitive health information by falsely claiming" it offered treatment to gain access to a network of medical records.

Daniel Baker, who was Integritort's CEO, said in an interview that he doubted that happened. Integritort shut down in 2024 after it lost access to a network of medical records, he said.

"Do you think we were trying to hide something with the name Integritort?" Baker said. The business model, he said, was about facilitating access to records that can be hard for patients to get on their own. Law firms referred their clients to Integritort, which connected them with physicians, Baker said.

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ERIE COUNTY

Disgraced DEA agent gets 5 years in prison for corruption

But jury acquits Bongiovanni of accepting \$250K kickback

Jim Mustian Associated Press

In two decades of kicking in doors for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Joseph Bongiovanni often took on the risks of being the "lead breacher," meaning he was the first person into the room.

He felt a familiar uncertainty Wednesday while awaiting sentencing for using his DEA badge to protect childhood friends who became prolific drug traffickers in Buffalo, New York.

"I knew never what was on the other side of that door — that fear is what I feel today," Bongiovanni, 61, told a federal judge, pounding the defense table as his face reddened with emotion. "I've always been innocent. I loved that job."

U.S. District Court Judge Lawrence J. Vilardo sentenced the disgraced lawman to five years in federal prison on a string of corruption counts. The punishment was significantly less than the 15 years prosecutors sought even after a jury acquitted Bongiovanni of the most serious charges he faced, including an allegation he pocketed \$250,000 in bribes from the Mafia.

The judge said the sentence reflected the complexity of the mixed verdicts following two lengthy trials and the almost Jekyll-and-Hyde nature of Bongiovanni's career, in which the lawman racked up enough front-page accolades to fill a trophy case.

Bongiovanni once hurtled into a burning apartment building to evacuate residents through billowing smoke. He locked up drug dealers, including the first ever prosecuted in the region for causing a fatal overdose.

"There are two completely polar opposite versions of the facts and polar opposite versions of the defendant," Vilardo said, assuring prosecutors five years behind bars would pose a considerable hardship to someone who has never been to prison.

SEE ERIE COUNTY, A3

CRIME AND SAFETY

Rangers to the rescue

Two state Department of Environmental Conservation forest rangers rescued a distressed hiker who had fallen into a river and suffered hypothermia. **A2**

NATION

Smith faces grilling

Former DOJ special counsel Jack Smith sought to defend his prosecutions of President Donald Trump in testimony before Congress on Thursday. **A4**

Paul Carey, 76, defense attorney and Salina town judge dies

He was also a former Onondaga County Sheriff's Office deputy.

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Moments of silence were held in some Onondaga County courtrooms Thursday for longtime defense lawyer and Salina town judge Paul Carey, 76, who died at home on Wednesday.

Carey was also a former Onondaga County Sheriff's Office deputy. The sheriff's office announced Carey's death late Wednesday night with "profound sadness," remembering him as a pioneer within the department and a lifelong public servant.

Carey began his career with the Sheriff's Office, where he played a key role in establishing the agency's K-9 Unit. He served

as the unit's first K-9 handler, a position the Sheriff's Office said he held close to his heart. Carey was especially proud of his service alongside his K-9 partner, Seamus.

Carey moved to the Syracuse area in 1978 to complete his bachelor's degree at Syracuse University before beginning his career in law enforcement.

After his time as a deputy, Carey became a prominent defense attorney. He was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1988 after graduating from the Syracuse University College of Law in 1987. Carey served as a Salina town justice beginning in 2008. He also served on the Salina Town Board in the

SEE SYRACUSE, A3



Longtime judge and defense attorney Paul Carey died Wednesday.

