X Marks the Spot: Mapping Medical ID Theft

9/29/11

By: Administrator

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the [interactive map](#) of medical identity theft occurrences in the United States recently created by the World Privacy Forum paints a vivid picture of the hot spots for this crime. The first of its kind, the map is based on 14 months of data from the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Sentinel database.

Medical identity theft is the fraudulent use of another individual's personal information to obtain medical services or products. If you're a victim, you could discover that you have bad credit due to unpaid bills for medical services that you never received or difficultly obtaining insurance because of pre-existing conditions that you don't have. But the results can also be life-threatening. For instance, what if someone with a different blood type impersonated you to seek medical treatment? If that person's blood type was entered into your medical records, you could be given the wrong blood type if you need emergency surgery. In a [report](#) about medical identity theft, the World Privacy Forum describes the difficulty that victims can encounter trying to clear these problems up and recommends steps that should be taken to make it easier.

Since the Consumer Sentinel data comes from consumer complaints and is not based on a random survey, it doesn't provide a definitive picture of the full scope of medical identity theft. But it does show where the most complaints about medical identity theft are made: Florida, California, New York, Arizona and Texas. The World Privacy Forum will be doing more work on this issue in the coming months. On its [medical identity theft page](#) you'll find reports, consumer tips, and FAQs about medical identity theft and consumer medical privacy.