When Tidyman’s father encountered an error in his medical record, raising the possibility that a transcription error; something we clearly should have been more careful about what’s in their medical records. Al- though having definitive data is an important piece of the puzzle, Tidyman notes that nearly all 10 people have experienced errors in their medical records online end up requesting that they be corrected for a variety of reasons.

In the worst-case sce- nario, an incorrect diagnos- is may have been inserted into a record, raising the possibilit- y of inadequate medical evaluation or treatment. In Tidyman’s case, he found out that Tidyman’s father encoun- tered an error in his medical record, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Tech- nology’s guide: www.healthit.gov/how-to-get-your-health-record/check-it.

The law that guarantees your right to review the medical record, the Health Insur- ance Portability and Account- ability Act of 1996, offers some recourse. If you think you’ve dis- covered an error in your medical record, you have the right to ask for a correction. Start by asking your doc- tor or hospital if they have a form (either a paper or elec- tronic one) that you can use to submit a suggested change.

A simple error such as a wrong phone number can be corrected by doing a thorough check of the mate- rial and writing a suggested change in the margins or making an electronic note. A more complicated error such as incorrect descriptions of your symptoms or a diag- nosis that you’re contesting may require a bit more state- ment from you explaining what material in the record was wrong, why and how it should be altered.

Physicians and hospitals are required to respond in writing within 60 days, with a 30-day extension in case of a more complicated error.

In less dire scenarios, a patient’s name, address, phone number, and other personal contacts may be incorrect, making it difficult to reach someone in the event of an emergency or causing a delay in delivery of important mail. Instead, the sur- gyon reassured the couple that the tumor was benign. Six months later, when Pat returned to the hospi- tal in distress, this error of omission was discovered. By then, Pat’s untreated cancer had spread. She died 25 years later.

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