

# Study: Hospital data breaches tied to thousands of additional patient deaths

Written by Julie Spitzer | March 27, 2018 | [Print](#) | [Email](#)

A researcher at Nashville, Tenn.-based Vanderbilt University Owen Graduate School of Management claims more than 2,100 patient deaths each year can be attributed to hospital data breaches, according to [The Wall Street Journal](#).

Sung Choi, PhD, analyzed data from HHS and CMS to compare patient-care metrics at hospitals that have experienced a data breach with those that have not. The study was presented March 22 at a cyberrisk quantification conference hosted by Drexel University's LeBow College of Business in Philadelphia.

One of the care metrics Dr. Choi reviewed was the proportion of heart attack patients who die within 30 days of being admitted to a hospital. She found the rate of patient deaths increased by 0.23 percent one year after a breach and by 0.36 percent two years after a breach. This equates to 2,160 additional patient deaths per year.

"Before a breach, the control group and breached hospitals are similar, then after a breach there appears some change in trend that made the breach hospitals have worse quality," Dr. Choi told *WSJ*.

Dr. Choi explains the damage caused by a data breach not only diverts funds away from patient care but distracts physicians for years after the incident.

"A breach triggers remediation activities, regulatory inquiries and litigation in the years following a breach... [these activities] disrupt and delay hospital services, and therefore leads to care quality problems," she told *WSJ*.

Hospitals that experienced a breach also took more time to administer an electrocardiograph to newly admitted patients — a common way to measure patient care quality — Dr. Choi added.

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