

To Our Patients, (past and present),

During a visit to San Francisco On June 27 my car was broken into and my computer stolen, along with camera, suitcases, and other equipment. The computer was an older office desktop I planned to give to my brother. It was hidden in the trunk.

The computer contained patient names, dates of birth, some phone numbers, and clinical notes, and e-mails. Addresses, social security numbers, and insurance information were not stored on the stolen computer.

Fortunately, the clinical notes were protected by two passwords, and were maintained in a format unique to the software used to prepare them. The software program itself was not on the computer, making the data almost impossible to decipher.

E-mail information was password protected, and generally contained laboratory reports, some reports from outside health care providers, and e-mails sent to the office by our patients.

I promptly reported this crime to the San Francisco Police Department, (report 156162776) I also immediately disconnected the computer from any access to our data on the internet and my office. I believe this was a crime of opportunity, and have not received any indication that the information has been accessed or used by anyone. Because that data has now been compromised, I owe each of you a personal apology. That is the central purpose of this letter.

Although it is unlikely your information will be misappropriated, as a precaution and for your own further protection, I recommend you monitor your bank and credit accounts, and report any suspicious activity.

The good news is that if the computer goes on line, Apple Computer will identify the computer, erase this disk, put up a message that the computer is stolen, and notify me. That service is very beneficial if anyone connects that computer to the internet. So far, I have heard nothing.

If you have questions, we have a separate phone number to respond to you concerns. The number is 707-497-9992. If we cannot answer the phone directly, we will get back to you in 24 hours or sooner during working hours. We will talk to you about any concerns, and have access to specialists who can answer the more technical questions.

I am very sorry that this has happened with information that I am responsible for protecting. We have taken additional steps at the office to protect your data further. Feel free to contact us by phone, or e-mail, if you have further questions.

Sincerely,
Robert E. Soper M. D.