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(Houston TX) – Investigators have charged a hospital employee with stealing the identities of cancer patients at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Harris County District Attorney Kenneth Magidson announced Monday.

A warrant was issued Friday for Angelina Cloud-Equam, a 26-year-old lead clerk in surgical pathology. She is accused of Fraudulent Use and Possession of Identifying Information, a third-degree felony that carries punishment of up to10 years in prison upon conviction.

Anna Emmons, a prosecutor in the District Attorney's Public Integrity Section, said the investigation began after a Houston cancer patient was contacted by a New Jersey-based bank. The call concerned a March 31, 2008 application filed online for $10,000 in credit in the patient's name, although she had never applied for the credit.

Emmons said e-mail and computer details from the application were traced back to Cloud-Equam. UT police determined that on March 29 she had accessed the patient's hospital application for treatment, which contained confidential identity information.

An analysis of computers at the defendant's home revealed that they contained personal information on two other patients. MD Anderson records showed Cloud-Equam had accessed that data from their hospital files in January.

Emmons said this type of alleged identity theft is particularly difficult for consumers to prevent because they are required to reveal their personal information to receive services. "They weren't careless," she said. Emmons said it is up to the requesting companies or institutions to ensure security.

Had the bank not called about a minor matter on the credit application, the alleged identity theft may not have been discovered, Emmons said.

The Cloud-Equam case will be heard in the 184th District Court. Bond is set at $20,000.
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