

Technology Watch

Is Your Text Messaging Service HIPAA Compliant?

“Two issues are contributing to the increased use of texting between dentists and dental labs: the cultural change in the way technology drives the need to share information and the reality that texting is the most efficient and effective way to communicate digitally,” says Arnold Rosen, DDS, Founder and CEO of Awrel, a HIPAA-compliant, cloud-based texting application (www.arwel.com).

But texters beware: using the native text-messaging app on your smartphone presents a risk if you're sharing protected health information (PHI). Dentists and labs are both required by HIPAA to protect PHI. “If a device is lost, stolen or hacked, the result can be the violation of a federal law and the consequences can result in auditing of your practice and/or lab,” says Dr. Rosen. “Financial penalties can range from \$10,000 to more than \$50,000.”

The best way to text with confidence is to use a HIPAA-com-

pliant texting application. When comparing different solutions, Rosen suggests making sure:

- It's available on both your mobile device and your desktop computer.
- It's capable of sharing and stor-

ing documents as well as DICOM, CT images, STL and other files.

- The app stores your data in the cloud rather than on your phone.
- The app vendor has backup protocols in place so PHI will not be deleted or lost.

- Since there's a legal requirement to maintain certain PHI for a specified number of years, the data is accessible even if you discontinue using the texting services.

- You have access to archived messages. ■

