

Media release:

SA HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY URGED TO PROTECT PATIENT MEDICAL RECORDS

21 February 2012: Data breaches among US healthcare organisations increased by 32% in 2011 year-on-year costing the US healthcare industry an estimated \$6.5 billion per year, according to a recent survey by the Ponemon Institute. This startling increase serves as a wake-up call for local medical institutions to review their current patient records management systems or face legal, financial and reputational repercussions.

This is according to Guy Kimble, Managing Director of Metrofile Records Management a division of JSE-listed Metrofile Holdings Limited, who says the most concerning finding from the study is that 49% of these breaches were not due to hacking, but as a result of employees losing, or having their mobile devices containing patient information stolen.

“Medical institutions that utilise Electronic Record Management Systems need to realise that their critical and sensitive patient information is no longer stored in a secure location but is often travelling with their employees wherever they go. Therefore, it is crucial that effective records management systems with reliable backup programmes are implemented to avoid devastating data breaches.”

Kimble says ineffective medical records management ultimately shows poor practice and an inability to provide consistent and reasonable healthcare, instigating reputational, financial and legal consequences, amongst others, for the medical institution. “Reconfirming the severity of patient records mismanagement, the study found that 29% of the data breaches lead to cases of identity theft.”

“In addition, untraceable patient information due to medical records mismanagement also makes it difficult to defend clinical negligence, disciplinary inquiries, malpractice cases and debtor obligations.”

Kimble advises that the best way to combat the challenge of managing medical records systems is to educate staff on the entire records management and storage process from creation, right through to destruction. “However, employing a dedicated records manager or outsourcing records management to a reputable service provider would be the best solution.”

“Medical professionals and institutions need to constantly review their existing records management systems and develop systems that best mitigate legal and financial repercussions, while increasing operational efficiencies to ultimately serve their patients more effectively,” says Kimble.

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**About Metrofile**

Metrofile is the market leader in information and records storage management in Africa and is represented in all the major provinces of South Africa. Metrofile operates from 26 facilities covering more than 73 000m² of warehousing space and manages more than 21 billion records on behalf of its customers.

Services include in and outsourced solutions to help business and government to increase their operating efficiency and meet their legislative and corporate governance requirements. These services comprise file plan development, training in all aspects of records management, the supply of files, active file management (on and off-site), archival of records (on and off-site), image processing, data protection, backup management, paper management and confidential records destruction. Metrofile also supplies and maintains a wide range of business equipment including scanners, library security systems, mailing and packaging machines.

Metrofile has been listed on the JSE Limited ("JSE") since 1995 and its ordinary shares are quoted in the Support Services sector of the JSE. Its largest shareholder is its empowerment partner, Mineworkers Investment Company (Pty) Limited ("MIC"), which owns 32,9% of Metrofile's equity. Visit www.metrofile for more information.