

US hospital firm reports data hacked for 4.5 million patients

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New York (dpa-AFX) - A major private US hospital corporation said Monday that personal data from 4.5 million people had been stolen from its computer systems by Chinese-based hackers.

Community Health Systems Inc, one of the largest chains of US hospitals, said the cyber-attack appeared to have taken place in April and June. The company said it learned last month of the breaches, which were revealed Monday in a financial report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, which regulates publicly-held firms.

The company said it has "worked closely" with federal law enforcement and prosecutors investigating the attack.

The document described the attack as coming from an "'advanced persistent threat' group originating from China who used highly sophisticated malware and technology to attack the company's systems."

The hackers got around Community Health Systems' security to copy and transfer data.

The same hacking group "has typically sought valuable intellectual property, such as medical device and equipment development data," the company said, citing a technology consultant and federal authorities.

The breach affected patients who had seen doctors affiliated with Community Health Systems in the last five years.

The data stolen was non-medical, and no credit card numbers were compromised, though names, addresses, birthdates, telephone numbers and US government social security numbers, which can be used to commit identity theft.

The company said it was notifying regulatory agencies and affected patients, who were being offered identity theft protection services