

FAQs

How do I know if my personally identifying information has been exposed by this scheme?

The University of California (the “UC” or the “University”) has provided two notifications – one to all students enrolled in the UC Student Health Insurance Plan (“UC SHIP”) and a second to students we know have been affected by the scheme. If the letter you received did not notify you that you have received prescription medication or been solicited for your UC SHIP membership information or other medical information, UC does not currently have information suggesting that your information was obtained or used in the scheme.

I participated in this clinical trial and now fear that I have suffered harm.

The prescription medications involved in this scheme include Dermacin, Inflammacin, Diclofex, Mebolic, Migranow, Inflammation Reduction Pak, Xelitral, and possibly others. UC encourages you to contact your student health center (see <http://www.ucop.edu/uc-health/reports-resources/student-health-services/index.html> for contact information) if you have any concerns about your health, if you received any of the medications above, if you participated in a “clinical trial” for a pain cream, or if you have received medication from a provider not known to you for any other reason.

This “clinical trial” had no affiliation with the University and was not approved or organized by the University.

UC researchers do conduct scores of legitimate clinical trials that allow patients access to new and innovative treatments, and lead to substantial breakthroughs for patient care. UC strongly encourages students and third parties to verify a researcher’s credentials and affiliation before participating in any clinical trial. Make sure that the informed consent form you sign lists an Institutional Review Board, or Ethics Committee, and contact them to make sure the study is legitimate. Information about clinical trials can also be found at www.clinicaltrials.gov. Students should beware of anyone offering “free” samples or easy cash in exchange for their personal information and of so-called “clinical trials” that offer large amounts of money just for signing up.

Are the medications that were prescribed dangerous?

UC encourages all students to contact their student health centers if they have received any of the medications above, if they participated in a “clinical trial” for a pain cream, or if they have received medication from a provider not known to them for any other reason.

The prescription medications involved include Dermacin, Inflammacin, Diclofex, Mebolic, Migranow, Inflammation Reduction Pak, Xelitral, and possibly others. Most of these medications are packaged in kits consisting of a drug similar to ibuprofen (either as a topical solution or as pills), coupled with a second component, which is similar to an over-the-counter “Ben-Gay” cream. Mebolic is a prescription vitamin product, and Migranow is a kit composed of a generic migraine medication plus a topical cooling liquid similar to over-the-counter “Vic’s VapoRub.”

With a few exceptions, there were no claims submitted by any of the involved prescribers for clinical care of the students for whom they wrote these prescriptions – even though the drugs at issue here should not be prescribed without a good faith medical examination and diagnoses of some condition to be treated. The above medications may also be contraindicated with

pregnancy, use of alcohol, and/or serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). This is why we're encouraging students to reach out to their medical providers if they have specific questions about the side effects of a medication they may have taken.

When and how did UC learn about this scheme?

UC SHIP regularly reviews prescription claim data for unusual activity. On Thursday, April 20, UC publicly filed court documents setting forth the information known to UC at the time. We cannot provide additional details about this investigation right now because it is ongoing.

Have the perpetrators been apprehended?

UC is actively working with law enforcement and will request that the perpetrators of this scheme be prosecuted. We cannot share information about any criminal investigation.

We are also reaching out to the medical and professional licensing authorities to ensure that they can take appropriate action to suspend or revoke licenses of any professionals abusing their positions.

Why did the University allow fraud perpetrators to access student data?

From what we have uncovered, this scheme did not involve a breach of any UC system. Rather, persons not affiliated with UC contacted students under false pretenses and convinced students to provide their UC SHIP membership information and other medical information. We are warning UC SHIP members and the entire University community about this scam so that they can better identify fraudulent schemes to unlawfully collect their personal information.

What of my personal information might be exposed?

The perpetrators of this scheme are believed to have solicited student information through a sham clinical trial advertised on Facebook through a company known as California Clinical Trials, LLC, through job fairs attended by companies known as Pharma Pro and Pharma Pro Solutions, and by setting up tables on campus during student events. Personal information that a student provided to one of those companies or individuals related to those companies may be at risk.

What is UC doing to protect its students?

UC is taking every reasonable step to protect our students and the UC SHIP plan from this kind of abuse. The UC SHIP health plan offers identity protection services made available by Anthem through ALL Clear ID. We have also taken immediate actions to cut-off the prescribers and all the companies and persons known to us who may be involved in this scheme, including suspending participation of such providers and pharmacies in UC SHIP. We have taken additional, preventive actions with respect to the high-cost drugs and kits involved here that are an emerging target for fraud and are placing additional controls on UC SHIP claims. We are actively pursuing legal action and working with law enforcement to hold the perpetrators accountable.

If students were involved in the scheme, as recruiters or otherwise, could they be expelled or prosecuted?

In general, UC follows the same policies and procedures any time that a student that engages in a crime or significant misconduct against the university or fellow students. Based on what we know now, this appears to be a scheme run by non-UC people and companies and targeting UC students. At this time, we do not know whether any students were purposefully or actively involved in the scheme, other than as victims.

Will the University reimburse me if these scammers stole my identity and opened financial accounts?

The UC SHIP plan offers identity theft protection services made available by Anthem through ALL Clear ID. There is also fraud protection offered by financial institutions for fraudulent transactions. Generally, the University is not liable for identity theft losses occurring as a result of a student providing personal information to a third party.

Will I be financially liable for these prescriptions (e.g., co-pays, lifetime cap, annual limits, etc.)?

No, we view what has happened to this point to be a fraud on UC SHIP and our students.

I have information that may assist law enforcement or the University in this matter.

Please contact the UCSC Police Department at (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.

I have additional questions not covered here.

If you are a student go to http://healthcenter.ucsc.edu/news-events/news/ucship_members.html or call (831) 502-7955.

If you are a journalist, please contact Scott Hernandez-Jason at (831) 459-4347.