HLB's Digital Health Blog

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California's AB 489 Signed into Law, Targeting AI Misrepresentation in Health Care Communications

California Governor Newsom has signed Assembly Bill 489 into law, which establishes protections against the misuse of artificial intelligence in health care communications. The new law, which takes effect **January 1, 2026**, prohibits AI systems from impersonating or misrepresenting themselves as licensed medical professionals.

Sponsored by Assemblymember Rob Bonta and supported by the California Medical Association and SEIU California, AB 489 amends existing consumer protection laws to ensure that generative AI tools cannot use misleading titles, post-nominal letters, or phrases that imply clinical authority. Each violation is enforceable by the relevant licensing board and treated as a separate offense.

The enactment of AB 489 reflects California's proactive approach to maintaining patient trust and transparency as AI tools increasingly interact with patients. The legislation compels developers to revise user interfaces and marketing language that could mislead users into believing they are receiving care from credentialed providers. Existing California law already mandates that AI-generated patient-facing content include clear disclaimers and offer access to a human contact when clinical information is presented. By extending false advertising and impersonation protections to AI-generated content, California sets a precedent for other states considering similar regulations. AB 489 underscores the importance of ethical boundaries and oversight as AI continues to reshape the health care landscape.

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