Hacking Humans

The Ethics of Curiosity, Corporate and Employment Privacy and The "Hacking Humans" Concept

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The digitization of DNA presents new dilemmas regarding the ethicality of such technology. While there are benefits such as personalized medications, potential for disease prevention, ancestry research and the possibility to solve cold cases, it exposes a major personally identifiable information (PII) liability. Rizkallah (2018) gives a great visual as to why digitizing DNA raises a dilemma – "your DNA is permanent, unchangeable. You cannot simply get new DNA like you could replace your Social Security, credit card or bank account number." I believe there are benefits to the digitization of DNA, but the benefits only outweigh the risks if: (1) user's give consent; (2) the organization implements strong security controls and has transparent and strict privacy policies; and (3) there's government oversight, rules and regulations to protect individuals.

A prospective concerning implication of digitizing DNA is genetic discrimination. Employers, insurance companies or any organization could use an individual's genetic information to base their decisions on. For example, "is it now OK for an employer to ask for your DNA to see if your genetic makeup makes you a fit for a particular role?" (Rizkallah, 2018). Though workplace discrimination laws exist such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws, the government would have to add the use of genetic discrimination to those laws and find ways to enforce them.

The concept of "Hacking Humans" becomes more literal, and less figurative when you involve digitized DNA. Being that traditional digital security involves login credentials like passwords and hacking humans "remains the easiest inroad for hackers to break into corporate networks," adding a permanent password, DNA, changes the cybersecurity landscape to long-term or lifelong protection of an individual's PII.

References

Rizkallah, J. (2018, November 29). *Hacking Humans: Protecting our DNA from cybercriminals*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2018/11/29/hacking-humans-protecting-our-dna-from-cybercriminals/?streamIndex=0#7f5a3e5f5287