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WHITE PAPER

# **SCREENING ASIA'S HEALTHCARE WORKERS TO PREVENT SAFETY RISKS**



The healthcare industry is a critical part of our daily lives. For employers that recruit medical professionals in Asia, hiring certain candidates without screening their background can likely pose serious risks and liabilities to your organization. The high-risk nature of healthcare has led to common consensus and concern that job applicants in this sector must undergo thorough background checks to ensure that high-quality and safe patient care is provided. However, lessening these concerns remains a challenge in some Asia-Pacific regions. To help you better understand the importance of conducting healthcare background checks in Asia, this whitepaper will cover the following:

- Why Background Checks are Essential to the Healthcare Sector.
- Key Screenings to Implement.
- The Prevalence of Medical Employment Fraud in Asia Pacific.
- Recommendations for Mitigating Healthcare-Related Fraud.



## WHY BACKGROUND CHECKS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE HEALTH SECTOR

Background checks are amongst the most effective gauge when hiring as it provides verified information about candidates from reliable sources. **In consideration of lives being at stake, screening prospective employees is also a vital safety measure for the healthcare industry.** For instance, receiving an adverse result about a candidate's criminal background check (e.g., he/she has committed a serious criminal offence) can help identify risks early on and subsequently protect patients and employees from potential harm. Common background checks that are conducted on healthcare candidates typically include (but are not exhaustive to) the following:

- Criminal record check (multi-jurisdictional and/or national)
- Drug and/or Alcohol testing
- Employment check
- Education check
- Identity check
- License and Qualification check
- Reference and CV Comparison check

COVID-19 has led to an exponential rise for more employees to be recruited in the medical industry. This has been fueled by the recent boom in businesses that manufacture medical supplies and healthcare facilities—including hospitals, research centers, pharmacies and other institutions that have emerged to meet the global healthcare demand. Besides hiring new workers under a time crunch, HR professionals are now tasked with maintaining retention rates while simultaneously managing their existing workforce. As such, healthcare companies must strengthen their recruiting measures to **ensure that they are hiring workers in a vigilant and lawful manner.**

## KEY BACKGROUND CHECKS TO IMPLEMENT

There is an often overlooked and easily avoidable risk. It is important to note that prior to conducting any form of checks, employers in Asia must refer to their local legislation to assess if screening and/or candidate consent is permitted and required. Or, you may alternatively partner with a renowned background screening firm like Cysive to stay compliant and informed of any changes to the law prior to background checking.



Now that you have an idea of the commonly implemented checks on healthcare workers, we can focus on the importance that each check serves.

- **Identity verification** is amongst one of the most used and popular background checks; it helps ensure that your applicant is not impersonating someone or misrepresenting him or herself. More importantly, it ensures that all subsequent checks you conduct on a candidate are in fact evaluating the correct individual.
- A **criminal record check** can help you determine candidate suitability by identifying applicants that may be convicted criminals or sex offenders. As healthcare practice often involves regular contact with vulnerable children and adults, running a national and multijurisdictional criminal check on candidates that have worked globally is crucial, especially as ensuring a “clean” criminal background is key when hiring healthcare practitioners.
- Many healthcare workers also have easy access to medical supplies such as drugs; thus, where permitted, **drug testing** checks can help uncover if a candidate has a history of substance abuse or drug habits. It additionally lessens the likelihood of hiring someone that may illegally misuse your valuable medical supplies for their own advantage.
- **Employment and education verification** are amongst the most implemented checks, as it verifies that only those with legitimate degrees/credentials can be employed. It also provides information on whether he/she was previously fired, revoked of a license, or put on probation due to previous misconduct or malpractice.

But what happens when healthcare and medical institutions do not conduct checks or have inadequate screening?

## THE PREVALENCE OF MEDICAL EMPLOYMENT FRAUD IN ASIA PACIFIC

Ninety percent of organizations expect increased levels of fraud to persist in 2021, based on findings from The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners’ [2020 global benchmark report](#), which also examined how COVID-19 may have made cases of fraud easier and more rampant due to prioritizing primary care and treatment as opposed to background screening during a pandemic. Forty-four percent of respondents additionally expect a significant increase in fraud risks throughout this year, including healthcare fraud (42%), identity theft (41%), and unemployment fraud (46%).

Given the pressures posed by the pandemic, many HR executives are often already preoccupied with hiring sufficient employees, much less the right candidate. But for healthcare employers that skip screening, potentially disastrous risk consequences may likely await. This may include damage to an organization’s reputation, public loss of trust, costly litigation, and **in the worst-case scenario – loss of (or harm to) human life due to a negligent hire**. The following case studies demonstrate some of the real-life repercussions faced by healthcare/medical facilities in Asia Pacific that failed to conduct background checks. Let’s take a look.



## CASE STUDIES

In India, [six fake doctors](#) were arrested after Indian authorities found that all of the “doctors” used fake medical qualifications (which were purchased from the same diploma mill) to land a career as a doctor. The Indian public was left outraged by this incident; particularly due to the doctor’s lengthy employment periods that left many people wary of other institutions in their region. **Indian authorities held that the hospital employers were accountable and questioned them about why they failed to conduct verification of their doctors’ backgrounds and how they failed to recognize red flags for so long.**

In contrast, for healthcare organizations that do examine their job candidates, the issue of employment fraud has far less detrimental impacts. For instance, a [fake medical certificate syndicate](#) was halted last year in Malaysia after a doctor **notified the authorities about a job applicant using a fake medical qualification.** As a result of the doctor raising his suspicions, the authorities uncovered an organized crime group that was selling fake medical certificates.

In another incident, in 2017, a [fraudster](#) from the U.S. was found guilty of impersonating a real psychiatrist and forging his qualifications to work at one of New Zealand’s biggest hospitals. The man earned an estimated NZ\$165,000 per month and wrongfully prescribed medication to vulnerable mental health patients throughout the course of his employment. Tini Clark, the crown prosecutor in the case, stated that the companies’ negligence “caused worry and inconvenience” for patients that were treated by the fake psychiatrist. She also mentioned that those that are found guilty of impersonating doctors **often flee the country to avoid prosecution.**

Similarly, Australia continues to garner widespread publicity over rising cases of fake doctors getting exposed. **One case involves a man that worked as a fake doctor for 11 years; earning a six-figure salary despite having zero medical qualifications.** He was only caught after the clinical research company that he worked for became suspicious of his medical background and alerted the authorities to investigate him. Not only did they confirm his non-existent medical background and find that **he had lied about being a registered doctor in Singapore (his home country), but that he had also entered Australia on a fake passport, and had been impersonating a British doctor throughout his career.** Shockingly, the man had also previously worked for pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca for 11 months in 2013. AstraZeneca [told ABC News](#) that it did not check his medical credentials as they were “not relevant” to his work in the company’s medical affairs team. As a result

of not conducting careful review of his background, both his former and current employer faced public backlash for potentially jeopardizing their clients, patients, and workforce.

The above cases and significant increase of global fraud occurrences due to COVID-19 have made impersonation, identity theft, and using fake degrees more common than you think. In fact, such fraudulent tactics are used in a range of industries. One way to prevent fraudsters from joining your firm is by partnering with an expert screening firm. Our team at Cive has spotted candidates using fake educational qualifications when applying for finance roles, to some lying about their previous criminal convictions to work as a driver, and others even going to the extent of using other people’s graduate certificate numbers to appear graduated.

Due to the immense trust placed in those looking after our health, it is vital that more healthcare organizations have proper safeguards in place to mitigate detrimental risk consequences. In consideration, here are a few recommendations to effectively detect and deter harmful risks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATING HEALTHCARE FRAUD RISKS

### Partner with an Expert Screening Firm

It is important to note that employers that hire applicants to work in the healthcare industry must comply to relevant legal criteria(s) in their region. This means that employers/hiring managers need to reference and understand specified employment provisions in their local legislation. However, due to lack of legal expertise, some employers may find it difficult to conduct lawful and thorough background screening independently/in-house. Thus, outsourcing third-party professionals like Cive can provide a simple solution to ensure enterprise-wide coverage and compliance. We understand the importance of ensuring patient and staff safety, which is why we provide healthcare-specific checks and solutions in over 196 countries.

### Take The Proactive Approach – Rescreening

Conducting rescreening, also known as continuous employee monitoring or “post-hire” background checks, is a proactive measure that helps identify dangerous actors or weak links in your existing workforce on a periodic/regular basis. Rescreening is particularly important when an employee has been promoted, made permanent or has had other changes made to his/her role. This is because initial background checks merely represent a candidates’ background in a





specific period of time, whereas important information about him/her (e.g., criminal record) can change. Post-hire checks additionally help identify any underlying risk indicators or existing undesirable behavior/actions committed by an employee, allowing you to take suitable actions in accordance to his/her updated check results and protect your staff and patients for the long-term.

### **Establish Clear Guidelines for Reporting Suspicious Activity**

As a worker at a medical facility, how do you distinguish a qualified healthcare practitioner from a poorly trained or fake one? And who do you tell if you suspect something is “off”? Healthcare firms should establish and communicate clear guidelines to their staff about when, how, and who to report suspicious activity to. In addition, when sensitive factors come into play, such as ethnicity or culture, an extra layer of consideration should be weaved into these guidelines. For instance, employers can appoint a reliable, knowledgeable, and honest staff member to receive all complaints or suspicions about personnel, and to also determine whether this information should be externalized to higher authorities.

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## ABOUT CISIVE

At Cisive, we are experts in the specific risks and regulations that apply to the financial services and other highly regulated industries. For many years, we have provided tailored solutions to meet the unique requirements of our enterprise clients.

Cisive's service model provides a single, integrated system throughout the globe using complete applicant information and country-specific forms. Cisive returns information to our clients through a centralized system for analysis, quality control, presentation, and billing.

With over 4 decades of experience and expertise in working with many of the world's largest financial services institutions, Cisive's deep insight into employment screening practices and industry knowhow, is unlike any other background screening provider in the industry.

Your business will not only get a background screening provider, but a lifelong partner – a company that stands by their work; protects their clients and provides the consultation and guidance world class act organizations are looking for.

## CONTACT US



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