



## Limiting Access to Your Health Records

British Columbians are interested in their information contained in health records within the health care system. Health records are kept at numerous points of service in the health care system. These points of service include physicians' offices, community clinics, hospitals, pharmacies and private labs. Where these records are in an electronic format, individuals sometimes have an option to limit access to their records to only certain health care providers. (This feature is often known as "masking".)

Generally, individuals can only limit access to their health records when they are being used for clinical purposes. Individuals cannot mask their records when they are used for secondary purposes such as billing, program monitoring and evaluation or research.

### 1. Provincial Electronic Health Record system—disclosure directives

The Ministry of Health Services is building a new provincial system that will be used by health care providers for clinical purposes. The provincial Electronic Health Record currently has only one repository—the Provincial Laboratory Information Solution that contains lab results. It is expected that, in future, there will also be repositories of diagnostic images and prescription information.

**Individuals can make a disclosure directive to limit who can access their lab results for clinical purposes. The *E-Health (Personal Health Information and Protection of Privacy) Act* stipulates that a health care provider can only override a disclosure directive with the consent of the individual or in an emergency when the individual is incapable.**

Individuals can make a disclosure directive by downloading a form from the website of the Ministry of Health Services [[http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ehealth/dd\\_process.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ehealth/dd_process.html)] and mailing it to:

Disclosure Directive Service

PO Box 9688 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria BC V8W 9P8

Further information about disclosure directives is available from a customer service representative by telephone at:

Health Insurance BC Contact Centre (HIBC)

Lower Mainland: 604-683-7151

Elsewhere in BC: 1-800-663-7100

## 2. PharmaNet—keywords

PharmaNet contains information about all prescription drugs dispensed in BC. This provincial system is accessed at community pharmacies, hospitals and physicians' offices.

**Individuals can limit access to their drug information by asking a pharmacist to attach a keyword to their file. With the keyword in place, only those health care providers with whom individuals share their keyword can access their records. If an individual is unable to remember or communicate their keyword in an urgent medical situation, a hospital or physician can request that it be removed.**

A patient information sheet about keywords in PharmaNet is available on the website of the Ministry of Health Services [[www.gov.bc.ca/health](http://www.gov.bc.ca/health)]. You can also contact a customer service representative by telephone at:

Lower Mainland: 604-683-7151

Elsewhere in BC: 1-800-663-7100

## 3. Health records at the Ministry of Health Services

The Ministry of Health Services collects health records from physicians in its administration of the Medical Services Plan (MSP) and from health authorities. Ministry databases include the MSP Registration and Premium Billing database, Discharge Abstract Database (information regarding all hospital discharges), Population Patient Registers, Continuing Care Information Management System and Mental Health and Addictions. This data, as well as PharmNet data, is provided to Population Data BC and the Canadian Institute for Health Information for research purposes.

Under new legislation passed in May 2010 (in force retroactive to April 1, 2009) the Minister of Health Services has the authority to collect, use and disclose personal information from all public bodies in BC for a stewardship purpose. (Bill 11—amendments to the *Ministry of Health Act*, *Health Authorities Act* and *Public Health Act*). A “stewardship purpose” is essentially a health system purpose. Specifically, it is defined in the legislation to include the following purposes:

- monitor or evaluate a program or activity;
- exercise powers or perform duties of the Minister;
- engage in health systems planning, maintenance or improvement;
- conduct or facilitate research;
- monitor or evaluate a health care body; or
- any other purpose that government may prescribe by regulation.

Under the new legislation, individuals cannot limit access to their health records that are collected by the Ministry of Health Services from health authorities or other public bodies for a stewardship purpose.

#### **4. Clinical systems in some Health Authorities in BC—options**

##### **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH)**

**There are several electronic record systems used at VCH and they have various masking or other enhanced privacy features.** For example, clients of community clinics may request to be considered as an Enhanced Information Security client in the Primary Access Regional Information System (PARIS). The record of an EIS client in PARIS may, at the option of the client, also be masked in CareConnect, VCH's regional electronic health record.

In **other systems** at VCH clients **may** have the ability to have a privacy-related flag applied to their record which is used to indicate to staff that the client has special instructions in place to protect the client's privacy during his or her hospital stay.

Further information about masking and other enhanced privacy options at VCH is available by contacting:

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority  
Information Privacy Office  
550 – 601 West Broadway  
Vancouver BC V5Z 4C2  
Tel: 604-875-5568  
Fax: 604-875-5374  
Email: [privacy@vch.ca](mailto:privacy@vch.ca)

##### **Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)**

Individuals are not able to limit access to their records in the electronic records systems at VIHA.

##### **Fraser Health Authority (FHA)**

Individuals do not have the ability to limit access to their records in the electronic records system at FHA known as Meditech.

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