



F07-01-MS Woman with Hereditary Disease Seeks Father's Medical History

A woman who had been adopted as an infant contracted a disease that she learned was frequently hereditary. Wanting to ensure that her children had the best health information available, she decided to try to find out the identity of her biological father. So she filed an access request for all records related to her adoption.

The ministry sent her a copy of the records but severed all information about her biological father. To divulge that information without his consent would have been an unreasonable invasion of his personal privacy under section 22 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The woman asked us to review the ministry's decision, emphasizing that she was only interested in finding out the ethnicity of her biological father (because her disease was far more prevalent in some racial groups than in others) and details of any health problems he might have experienced, rather than his precise identity.

Such requests have become more common because of increased understanding of links between genetic characteristics and incidence of certain diseases. As a result, the ministry has made arrangements with the Adoption Reunion Registry under which registry staff will review adoption records and disclose to adopted children their hereditary information without breaching confidentiality requirements. We told the woman about this option and she felt it was a reasonable compromise that might enable her to obtain the information she needed.