



IT'S CONFIDENTIAL!

...but does that apply to you too?

You know that patient information is confidential but what if you want to find out about a friend or family member?

● The Law(s)

Protection of confidential health information in BC is governed by overlapping laws:

- **Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)** - applies to health care providers in private practice.
- **Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)** - applies to health authorities, hospitals, and those in public sector. Guarantees right of individuals to gain access to and request correction of personal information collected about them by public bodies.
- **E-Health (Personal Health Information Access and Protection of Privacy) Act** - applies to certain designated databases.
- **Ministry of Health Act** - grants Minister of Health power to interact with personal health information for a wide range of purposes.
- **Public Health Act and Health Authorities Act** - protects privacy of personal health information stored in electronic systems of health authorities.

● What's Confidential?

- Personal information (excluding business contact information)
- Business information collected or created by a Health Authority
- Information provided by external vendors or service providers
- Information related to ongoing litigation, investigations, or reviews
- Information discussed in in-camera deliberations
- Unpublished statistical information and internal correspondence
- Information supplied in confidence to mediators or arbitrators
- Any information that could be prejudicial to the interest of a Health Authority
- Organizational business information that could harm financial interests
- Information related to management of a Health Authority not yet made public such as security architecture/infrastructure of information systems

● What it Means

Physicians, like any other individuals, are subject to privacy laws and regulations when it comes to accessing health information. They are not allowed to access information, including that of their family members, unless it is necessary for providing medical care and the patient has given consent.

Unauthorized access to health information, even out of curiosity, is considered a breach of privacy and can result in penalties under privacy laws. If a practitioner needs to access the health information of a family member for medical reasons, they should follow the appropriate procedures to ensure they are complying with privacy laws.

Processes may include completing the appropriate authorization form and submitting it to the department at the location where care was received.

Authorized signatories on the form may include the patient, their legal representative, or someone with written consent.

The time it takes to obtain the information may vary and a fee may be required.