

Public Notification
re: Personal Health Information

Thursday, August 12, 2010

Please be advised that last week, Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) was notified that patient-related documentation remained at the former Rogers Street Site – a building the hospital vacated in 2008 and sold in 2009.

PRHC management responded swiftly and a comprehensive search of the building was immediately initiated. Within 72 hours of receiving the initial information, all documents and computers were removed from the Rogers Street Site and stored securely at PRHC.

The Health Centre recognizes the seriousness of this situation. The security of Personal Health Information is of utmost importance; it's not only our priority, it's our responsibility. We are working closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario to ensure that we are meeting our obligations under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, which is the applicable privacy law.

Questions & Answers

What documents were retrieved from the Rogers Street Site?

PRHC retrieved more than 25,000 working documents and approximately 70 computer hard drives. The documents contain information such as patient names, addresses and sometimes diagnoses.

PRHC is in the process of examining the documents. Our review to-date indicates they are primarily working and back-up departmental documents – not patient charts. Most are between 10 and 50 years old and accordingly, dormant and archival. Many were to be destroyed in compliance with legal requirements and our records retention policy.

For further detail on the documents, please read the attached Public Message.

As a former patient, should I be concerned?

Former patients and their family members can rest assured that their medical records are complete. Patient charts have not been compromised.

What is PRHC doing to ensure this doesn't happen again?

A thorough investigation of the incident is underway. PRHC is looking into how this happened despite several inspections of the building after we vacated the premises. Clearly, there was a breakdown in our policies and procedures.

PRHC will be addressing this issue and reassures its community that we are committed to the highest quality of patient care.

Should you wish to contact us about this matter, please call 876-5094 or 1-866-234-1570 or e-mail patientr@prhc.on.ca

A public message from Ken Tremblay, President & CEO, Peterborough Regional Health Centre

My name is Ken Tremblay. I am the President and CEO of Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) and in that capacity I would like to share the following information with you.

Late last week, PRHC became aware that a large number of documents containing Personal Health Information had been left behind at our former Rogers Street Site, a building we sold in October 2009.

PRHC recognizes the seriousness of this situation. The security of Personal Health Information is of utmost importance; it's not only our priority, it's our responsibility. In June 2008, the hospital consolidated two sites into one newly-constructed hospital. One of the two former sites was demolished. The second, the former Rogers Street Site, was sold in October 2009.

How We Responded

Last week, PRHC was notified that patient-related documentation remained at the former Rogers Street Site. PRHC management responded swiftly and a comprehensive search of the building was immediately initiated. Within 72 hours of receiving the initial information, all documents and computers were removed from the Rogers Street Site and stored securely at PRHC.

We recovered more than 25,000 working documents and approximately 70 computer hard drives. The documents contain information such as patient names, addresses and sometimes diagnoses.

Regular security rounds took place 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week in the locked building until it changed hands. However, after June 8, 2008, this documentation was not stored, or destroyed, in accordance with our usual policies and practices.

What We Retrieved

We are in the process of examining the documents. Our review to-date indicates they are primarily working and back-up departmental documents – not patient charts. Most are between 10 and 50 years old and accordingly, dormant and archival. Many were to be destroyed in compliance with legal requirements and our records retention policy. We expect our examination will take up to two weeks to complete.

Former patients and their family members can rest assured that their medical records are complete. Patient charts have not been compromised.

The documents include approximately 800 files from clinical trials in oncology in 2003, approximately 22,000 laboratory requisitions, results and sometimes, accompanying slides, approximately 1,600 audiology files, approximately 1,500 electromyography

(EMG) files, approximately 500 pharmacy files, and approximately 45 developed X-ray films and several log books.

The computer hard drives are largely inoperable, and are unlikely to have clinical or personal health information as that resides on an external server. They are being examined before they are destroyed.

The documents were located in the basement of the building, with the exception of the files from clinical trials in oncology, which were stored in a locked room until PRHC retrieved them.

Partnering with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario

After retrieving these documents, we reported the situation to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. PRHC will be working closely with the Privacy Commissioner in the days and weeks to come to ensure we have the benefit of its advice and fulfill our obligations under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, which is the applicable privacy law.

Should you wish to contact us about this matter, please call 876-5094 or 1-866-234-1570 or e-mail patientr@prhc.on.ca

Our Investigation

A thorough investigation of the incident is underway. However, I can tell you with certainty that the circumstances are accidental and absolutely unintentional – they are also unacceptable. On behalf of PRHC, I apologize.

We are looking into how this happened despite several inspections of the building after we vacated the premises. Clearly, there was a breakdown in our policies and procedures.

In closing, I would like to reiterate PRHC's promise to address this issue and reassure you that we are committed to the highest quality of patient care for our community. Thank you.

Ken Tremblay
President & CEO
Peterborough Regional Health Centre