

Harris Bungling Masks Need for Better Use of Medical Records

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Toronto and Hamilton – The Medical Reform Group today supported the principle of using patient health records to help with planning health care delivery in Ontario.

Referring to the Harris government's including police access to records in their new legislation, MRG spokesperson Dr. Rosana Pellizzari commented, "It's unfortunate that the government got their overzealous anti-crime agenda and their health care reform agendas confused. The way the government has handled the legislation gives the real need for effective use of information a bad name."

"The legislation lumps appropriate and inappropriate access to information," added another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt. "Allowing those managing health care, or researchers working to make the system work better, access to records is one thing. Letting the police, or officials investigating alleged fraud, to have access to records without patient's permission is something quite different."

"Clearly, any access has to include safeguards to ensure patient confidentiality and eliminate any possibility of abuse," Pellizzari acknowledged. "But we must also ensure that caregivers can access patient information easily, and remove barriers that prevent health planners and researchers from using health care utilization data. We will be making a mistake if we let confidentiality concerns prevent us from using the power of information systems for effective health care planning, and for studying ways of improving health care."

"Unfortunately, the Harris approach legitimately increases fears of abuse of patient data."