



## **Your Privacy**

### *Your Privacy is Important to US*

South Huron Hospital Association (SHHA) is committed to keep your personal health information safe and confidential. The privacy of our patients is very important to us. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about your privacy at the hospital. Information on this site is updated on a regular basis to reflect recent legislative changes.

#### **Privacy Office Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about how we collect and share your personal or health information contact:

#### **Privacy Office**

Telephone: (519) 235 – 2700 Ext. 5194

Email: [privacy@shha.on.ca](mailto:privacy@shha.on.ca)

#### **Privacy Laws in Canada**

Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA). PHIPA is Provincial legislation that governs the collection, use and sharing of personal health information. It is based on ten principles that hospitals, doctors, community health care organizations, and other health practicing facilities must follow when collecting, using and sharing personal health information. SHHA has established a privacy program based on these principles.

#### **The 10 Privacy Principles of PHIPA**

- Accountability
- Identifying Purposes
- Consent
- Limiting Collection
- Limiting Use, Disclosure and Retention
- Accuracy
- Safeguards
- Openness
- Individual Access
- Challenging Compliance

#### **Accountability**

An organization is responsible for personal information under its control and shall designate an individual or individuals who are accountable for the organization's compliance with the following principles.

## **Identifying Purposes**

The purposes for which personal information is collected shall be identified by the organization at or before the time the information is collected.

## **Consent**

The knowledge and consent of the individual are required for the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, except where inappropriate.

## **Limiting Collection**

The collection of personal information shall be limited to that which is necessary for the purposes identified by the organization. Information shall be collected by fair and lawful means.

## **Limiting Use, Disclosure and Retention**

Personal information shall not be used or disclosed for purposes other than those for which it was collected, except with the consent of the individual or as required by law. Personal information shall be retained only as long as necessary for the fulfillment of those purposes.

## **Accuracy**

Personal information shall be as accurate, complete and up-to-date as is necessary for the purpose for which it is used.

## **Safeguards**

Personal information shall be protected by security safeguards appropriate to the sensitivity of the information.

## **Openness**

An organization shall make readily available to individuals specific information about its policies and practices relating to the management of personal information.

## **Individual Access**

Upon request, an individual shall be informed of the existence, use, and disclosure of his or her personal information, and shall be given access to that information. An individual shall be able to challenge the accuracy and completeness of the information and have it amended as appropriate.

## **Challenging Compliance**

An individual shall be able to address a challenge concerning compliance with the above principles to the designate individual or individuals accountable for the organization's compliance.

## **Information Collected**

### **What Type of Information Do We Collect About You?**

To provide you with quality health care, we collect both personal and health information from you. Your name, date of birth, address, Health Card Number and extended health insurance numbers are examples of personal information. Your health history, the records of your visits to the hospital and what health care we provide to you during those visits are examples of your health information.

### **How Is Your Information Used?**

The information we collect from you is used:

- To provide you with quality health care and follow up care in the community.
- To carry out quality assurance to help make us better.
- For patient satisfaction surveys to see how we are doing.
- To comply with legal and regulatory requirements.
- For fundraising for equipment and facilities to provide you with the most modern health care services.
- For education to keep current health care practitioners up to date and to train new health care practitioners for the future.
- If your information were to be used for any other purpose, your specific permission would be required first.

### **Do We Share Your Information with Anyone?**

SHHA is partnered with organizations in Southwest Ontario using a shared electronic patient record system. Within this system, unless requested otherwise, the personal health information may be shared among:

- Other Cerner hospitals as part of the Regional Shared Service
- Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS)
- Southwestern Digital Imaging Network
- Provincial networks and registries i.e. Cancer Care Ontario, Ontario Laboratories Information System, DI Common Services, Clinical Connect, Health links etc.
- Internal patient surveys, foundation
- Health care providers and health care agencies that become part of your health care team for the purpose of your continuing care i.e. Community Care Access Center (CCAC)

Your information is also disclosed with agencies that fund the hospitals, for example, OHIP, health insurance companies and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

We may also provide personal information to hospital consultants, and professional advisors to assist the hospitals to function and provide care to our patients. What we share with these agencies is bound by law.

# How Do I Access My Personal Health Information?

## **Viewing a Health Record**

A person can view their own health record at the health care facility where they were treated. The same guidelines apply for viewing the health record of an individual under the age of 16, or viewing the health record of the deceased patient as outlined below.

## **Obtaining a Copy of a Health Record**

- **Obtaining a copy of your own health record:** You can obtain a copy of your own hospital health record by submitting an Authorization for Release of Patient Information form to the Health Records Department. These forms are available through SHHA's Health records department. Once completed the form must be either mailed or dropped off in person to the Health Records Department.
- **Obtaining a copy of the health record of an individual under the age of 16:** To obtain a copy of a health record of an individual under the age of 16, a parent, or legal guardian must submit an Authorization for Release of Patient Information form to Health Records Department. These forms are available through SHHA's Health Record Department. Once completed the form must be either mailed or dropped off in person to the Health Records Department.
- **Obtaining a copy of the health record of a deceased patient:** If you are requesting a copy of the hospital record of a patient that is deceased, you must submit proof of your legal signing authority in addition to an Authorization for Release of Patient Information form to Health Records Department. These forms are available through SHHA's Health Records Department. Once completed the form must be either mailed or dropped off in person to the Health Record Department.
  - **You must provide either:**
    - a copy of the deceased person's Will naming you as the Executor or,
    - in the absence of a Will, a letter notarized by a lawyer to confirm your legal signing authority.
- **Obtaining a copy of the health record for a third party:** You can request that a copy of your hospital health record be released to a lawyer, insurance company, or any other third party specified by you, by completing an Authorization for Release of Patient Information form to Health Records Department. These forms are available through SHHA's Health Records Department. Once completed the form must be either mailed or dropped off in person to the Health Records Department.
- **Obtaining a copy of the health record for other health care providers:** When requested, copies of your health record may be released to health care providers outside the hospital to ensure the best continuing care for you. Your attending physician at the hospital may also share reports or summaries of your treatment at the hospital with other physicians and health care providers involved in your care to ensure they are aware of treatments or medications that may affect your ongoing care.

## **How Do I Correct My Personal Health Information?**

If demographic information, e.g., name, address, phone # etc., is incorrect, you can contact:

### **Patient Registration.**

SHHA – 519-235-2700 and press 0

If you feel that any other information in your health record is incorrect, or requirements amendment, please contact the Privacy Office. Your request will be reviewed by the Privacy Office and the author of the record. By law, the hospitals are not required to correct a professional opinion or observation made in good faith about a patient. Please contact the Privacy Office at [privacy@shha.on.ca](mailto:privacy@shha.on.ca) or by phone 519-235-2700 Ext.5176 if you have any questions

## **How Do I Restrict the Sharing of My Personal Health Information?**

SHHA aims to accommodate the wishes of a patient, or the Substitute Decision Maker (SDM), the right to restrict the collection, use and/or disclosure of their PHI unless permitted or required by law. If you would like to apply restrictions to your personal health information, please contact the Privacy Officer who will assist in the process to do so.

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Patients/Clients**

South Huron Hospital Association (SHHA) respects the privacy of your personal health information. The following is a list of questions that we frequently get asked. If you have other questions or concerns, please contact the Privacy Office.

### **Privacy Office for SHHA**

Telephone: (519) 235-2700 Ext.5176

E-mail: [privacy@shha.on.ca](mailto:privacy@shha.on.ca)

## **What information does the hospital collect?**

The hospital collects both personal and health information. Information like your name, date of birth, address, Health Card Number and extended health insurance numbers are examples of personal information. Information relating to previous health problems, the record of your visits to the hospital and what health care we provide to you during those visits are examples of your health information.

## **Why does the hospital need this information?**

### **The information we collect from you is used:**

- To provide you with quality health care and follow-up care in the community. We need your information to make sure we can make the appropriate diagnosis and provide treatment.
- To release very limited information to family and friends who may call, for example to find out what room you are in. We may provide generalized condition reports such as “good, fair, serious or critical” to other individuals who are not immediate family. If you

do not wish your name to be included in the Patient Information list, please notify Patient Registration when you arrive or inform your healthcare provider. This would mean that if anyone called in asking about you, they would be informed that we have no one by that name on our patient list. Your presence in the hospital as well as a general condition report (good, fair, serious, critical) must be provided by the hospital if requested by law enforcement agencies.

- To carry out quality assurance to help make us better. By reviewing the care we provide to patients we can determine what strategies are most successful.
- To ask you how we are doing. You may be asked to participate in surveys by either the hospital or by specific programs or departments in the hospital that participated in your care.
- To comply with the law. The law requires the hospital to turn over your personal health information if there is a legal investigation. We also use your information to obtain funding for health services from the Ministry of Health.
- For fundraising. Your contact information, for example, your name and address are provided to the hospitals' Foundation so they may contact you to see if you wish to make a donation. Donations by our patients and members of the community raise money for equipment and facilities to provide you with the most modern health care services. The hospital does not provide names of patients who have certain more sensitive procedures or diagnoses to the Foundation. Your personal health information, for example, your diagnosis or treatment, is not released to the Foundation.
- For education to keep existing health care practitioners up-to-date, and to train new health care practitioners for the future. The hospital is associated with educational institutions that train health care professionals.

## **How do the hospitals protect my information?**

**A few of the ways that the hospitals strive to protect both your personal information and your personal health information are by:**

- Stressing to our staff, physicians, volunteers and students the importance of respecting your privacy rights and the importance of maintaining confidentiality.
- Requiring that all staff wear photo identification at all times while on hospital property to protect against unauthorized individuals accessing information.
- Applying additional security measures to all electronic health records; for example, user names and passwords, firewall and antivirus software.
- Locked doors.
- Security personnel.

## **Does the hospital share my information with anyone?**

**We share some or all of your information with:**

- Health care providers at other hospitals, nursing homes or other health care agencies who become part of your health care team. Information is shared for the purpose of your continuing care in the community.
- Agencies that fund the hospitals, for example OHIP, extended health insurance companies, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Ministry of Health.

- Other agencies as required by law, for example, public health surveillance.

### **Do I have to participate in fundraising, research, teaching and surveys?**

- The SHHA Foundation has worked for many years to raise funds for vitally needed equipment to provide the community with quality health care. Without the generosity of our donors, we would not have these services. Participation in fundraising is not mandatory. Contact the Privacy Office to request that your name be removed from our fundraising contact list or complete and forward the Request to Restrict Personal Information for Fundraising and Surveys.
- SHHA may provide health information for the purpose of research. Researchers may access this information only after the hospital removes identifying personal information, for example, names, and addresses. Other research methods, such as clinical trials or clinical investigation that may have a direct impact on your care, requires your specific permission. A member of your health care team may ask your permission for a researcher, who is affiliated with the hospital, to approach you about a clinical research trial. If you agree, the researcher would provide you with information about the research and ask if you would like to participate. Many research projects give participants access to new treatments and technologies. You are under no obligation to participate in this type of research, and you can refuse when asked. The care you receive will not be impacted in any way if you decline.
- The hospital provides clinical experience for student physicians, nurses and a variety of other health care professionals. The students are constantly under the direction of a licensed practitioner. If you have concerns about the participation of students in your care, please speak to your physician or Leader in the area where you are receiving your care.
- Surveys help the hospital by allowing us to get your opinion on the care and services you receive as a patient. Participation in the surveys is not mandatory and you can decline participation and/or request to be removed from the hospitals' survey list.

### **Will the hospital disclose my health information to outside companies or to my employer?**

The hospital requires your written permission or a court order to disclose health information to any organization or person not directly involved with the provision of patient care.

### **Where is my health information stored and for how long?**

Hospitals are required to keep health records for at least 10 years past the date of the last admission. In some cases, for example health records for children and records maintained for the purpose of research, are kept for much longer. Most health records are maintained in the Health Record Services department, but some departments, including Diagnostic Imaging and Laboratories, maintain their own specific records.

## **How do I access or request a copy of my health information?**

- Ask your health care provider for information about your diagnosis and treatment while you are a patient at SHHA.
- To obtain a copy of, or view your SHHA health record, please contact the Health Records department.
- You have the right to access your personal health record and the hospital has an obligation to make it available to you with limited exceptions. If releasing your information would put yourself or a third-party at risk, the hospital has a legal right to choose not to disclose some or all of that information.

## **What if some of the information in my health record is incorrect?**

Please see How Do I Correct My Personal Health Information section.

## **Can my family see my health information?**

Although you have the right to access your health record, this right does not automatically extend to family members and/or friends. If you consent to let a friend or family member see your record, then the friend/family member may access the part(s) that you have consented to let them see.

## **What if I am unable to give consent to release my health information?**

If you are unable to give consent for a friend or family member to access your health information due to reasons such as competency or consciousness, the consent decision falls to the appointed substitute decision maker, such as a spouse, parent or guardian.

## **Will my family and friends be able to call in to get information about me over the phone?**

When someone calls the hospital, the staff has no way to verify who is calling and what their relationship is to you. Normally, in order to protect patient privacy, only a minimum amount of information is given out over the phone.

## **Can all hospital staff access my health information?**

The only persons whom the hospital authorizes to access a patient record are the staff and physicians involved in a patient's care, or staff who need information from a patient record to conduct the business of the hospital, e.g., the Finance department staff that sends a bill to a patient's extended health insurance company.

All staff and hospital affiliates are bound by hospital policies and practices related to Privacy and Confidentiality. These policies aim to ensure that staff only access information on a need-to-know basis. Regulated Health Professionals are also bound by privacy and confidentiality requirements from their professional Colleges.

### **Can I find out who has viewed my hospital record?**

Yes. If you have concerns about unauthorized personnel accessing your information, you can make a request to the Privacy Office to audit your electronic hospital record. An audit is a process that tracks every staff or physician who has accessed your electronic record by date and time. We can perform an audit on your electronic health record and a limited audit on your hardcopy health record. We will ensure that your concerns are investigated promptly and a response is provided to you in a timely manner.

If you would like to request an audit please contact the Privacy Office. You will be asked to verify your identity by providing a government-issued ID that has your signature.

### **I have noticed that many areas of the hospital are open and I can sometimes overhear staff talking to patients and family about health information. Is this not a breach of patient privacy?**

Despite the pressures of an acute-care hospital setting, staff make every effort to discuss health information confidentially.

### **Can my family physician access my health information?**

SHHA releases certain information, for example, inpatient discharge summaries, Emergency Department records, to family physicians to facilitate your continuing care. Other information can be released to your family physician at your request and with your consent. If you do not want your family doctor to receive information, let Patient Registration or your health care provider know.

### **What if I have concerns about my privacy?**

Please contact the Privacy Office if you have any questions or concerns.