

(excerpt from January 1995 Bulletin)

### Disposition of Medical Records:

The ethical physician must make every reasonable effort to preserve medical records for a reasonable length of time in all circumstances and to make the information available to appropriate persons on proper authority whenever required.

In March 1992, Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta passed the following motion:

#### *THAT:*

1. *X-ray films should be retained for a minimum of five years. In the case of minors, they should be retained for five years or two years after the patient reaches the age of majority, whichever is longer. X-ray films of patients who have been declared mentally incompetent should be retained for a minimum of ten years.*
2. *Mammography films should be retained for a minimum of five years and up to ten years when there are not intervening studies.*
3. *All x-ray reports must be kept for a minimum of ten years.*

In December 1994, Council passed an additional motion regarding the retention of certain bulky recordings:

4. *A physician shall retain for a minimum period of ten years, or in the case of minor patients, until two years after the age of majority or for ten years, whichever is longer, by electronic means or storage of hard copy, the entire interpretive report and a segment of continuous physiologic recordings, whether abnormal or not, sufficient to support the interpretation made.*

Council recommends that other medical records should be retained for a minimum of ten (10) years following the date of last service; in the case of minor patients, they should be kept at least until two (2) years past the age of majority or for ten (10) years, whichever is longer.

Following this period of availability, records may be disposed of by suitable shredding: such service is available commercially.

\* \* \*

Very practical problems exist with respect to storage and access. The public and physicians, from time to time, find that it is important to review previous medical records. They expect them to be available and to be transferred on request to:

- a) Another physician
- b) Third parties – lawyer, Court, insuring agent, government agency

Continued on reverse...

**\*\*PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM ON THE REVERSE\*\***

Possible solutions for retention (of medical records) include storage by:

- a) Partners
- b) Colleagues
- c) Medical Clinics
- d) Hospitals
- e) Family
- f) Bonded commercial storage

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta may be consulted in individual cases.

\* \* \*

All physicians when ceasing to practice should notify the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta on the whereabouts of patient records for future access.

Special consideration should be given to the disposition of medical records when closing a medical practice for a variety of reasons including the following:

- a) Suspension under discipline
- b) Erasure under discipline
- c) Voluntary erasure
- d) Retirement
- e) Unexpected acute illness, chronic illness, or death

To ensure continued access to the patient records by interested parties, we ask that you complete the portion below and return it to our office. If you have any questions please call (780) 423-4764.

.....  
(Please print legibly)

**My patient medical records are now in the care of:**

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Registration #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to: Registration Department  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta  
2700-10020 100 Street NW  
EDMONTON AB T5J 0N3**