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**The Society of General Practitioners of BC and the BC College of Family Physicians stand up for patient privacy and encourage broad debate and consultation on electronic data sharing initiatives**

The Society of General Practitioners (SGP) of BC jointly with the BC College of Family Physicians (BCCFP), support broad consultation and careful review of the privacy impacts of data sharing initiatives. These organizations jointly concur with the privacy commissioner in stating that "Government should not proceed with any more data sharing initiatives until a meaningful public consultation process has occurred, and the outcome of that process is an enforceable code of practice for data sharing programs. FIPPA should be amended to give the OIPC a statutory mandate to review and approve all data sharing initiatives."

Data sharing initiatives include: health region integration initiatives, new referrals models, uploading of patient information to centralized databases or any other examples where information is flowing or being shared in a new or different manner.

The SGP and the BCCFP also support the privacy commissioner's recommendation that "privacy impact assessments must be completed at the conceptual, design, and implementation phases of an electronic record project. This requirement should apply to health authorities as well as to ministries of government," and were pleased to see that this was part of the recommendations of the Special Committee to review The Freedom of Information and Privacy Act) FIPPA. We encourage the government to implement these recommendations of its special committee and the privacy commissioner's office.

Incoming SGP President Ralph Jones notes that "good clinical practice in the technological age is a complex achievement, and that information flow will change with technology. It is important that changes remain consistent with basic principles ensuring patient privacy and confidentiality, which are the cornerstone of trust upon which the doctor patient relationship is built."

The SGP and the BCCFP believe doctors and patients need to be better informed about the issues and participate in the debate. Jones adds that "Our role as the SGP is ideally to keep debate open, and enable discussion, rather than to produce final answers. We are working to keep the family physicians of BC informed and thinking about these issues and participating in this important discussion. The decisions that are made today about how data is shared electronically, will have implications for decades to come."