



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 31, 2013

HEU calls for audit of outsourced medical transcription services over privacy concerns

The Hospital Employees' Union is asking B.C.'s privacy commissioner Elizabeth Denham to launch an investigation into outsourced medical transcription services in the Lower Mainland, citing concerns over the privacy and accuracy of patients' medical information.

The union is urging the Commissioner to use her legislative authority to conduct an investigation and audit of measures taken by Lower Mainland health authorities to protect personal medical information outsourced to private transcription companies for processing.

Over the past few years, these health authorities have dramatically expanded the outsourcing of medical transcription and plan to completely contract out the service by 2014.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says that would leave the transcription of nearly all patient information in the hands of private companies that rely on individual subcontractors working out of their homes, putting accuracy and privacy at risk.

"Right now, highly trained and skilled medical transcriptionists are employed by health authorities and work onsite in secure office spaces," says Pearson.

"This in-house service ensures direct access to electronic medical records, physicians and other members of the health care team to verify patient information, tests and procedures, diagnoses, medications and treatment plans.

"Our members are charged with handling highly sensitive data. It's imperative that work be done on internal information systems with secure internet connections. This system makes sense and provides greater quality assurances for patients' medical charts," adds Pearson.

"If medical transcription is completely outsourced, it will be virtually impossible to guarantee privacy when the work is done by a nationwide network of home-based workers."

Currently, a significant portion of Lower Mainland health authorities' medical transcription services is outsourced to Accentus, Inc. By 2014, all Lower Mainland medical transcription is scheduled to be transferred to another private company M*Modal Canada.

As a result, Providence Health Care (on behalf of all Lower Mainland health authorities) issued lay-off notices to more than 130 in-house medical transcriptionists last November.

HEU's January 31 letter to B.C.'s privacy commissioner Elizabeth Denham requests that she use her authority under sections 42 and 44 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to conduct the review. It can be viewed or downloaded from our website.

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