

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND PHARMACY BOARD

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*Member Organization of the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA)*

## POLICY STATEMENT

### The Release of Information from Prescription Files to Data Compilers

#### Introduction

Prescription profiles contain critical data which, when compiled and used appropriately and ethically, can help to advance academic research, education and pharmacoepidemiologic studies. Over the past three decades, pharmacists, along with physicians, hospitals and manufacturers, have provided commercial data compilers, such as IMS, with data on diagnosis, disease and treatment patterns, with the goal of fostering rational and appropriate prescribing and, therefore, optimal patient care.

However, the issue of the release of physician specific data from prescription files to commercial data compilers became a concern for many physicians in Canada. It was the opinion of these physicians that the release of individual physician data (as opposed to aggregated data) constituted an invasion of their privacy.

The Board has explored the issue with IMS and the nine other provincial regulatory authorities and has developed the following policy regarding the release of prescription data to commercial data compilers. This policy balances the need for crucial data for public health with the desire of prescribers and pharmacists for personal confidentiality.

**Remember, PATIENT confidentiality must be maintained at all times.**

#### Policy

Before providing data from prescription files to commercial data compilers, pharmacists must review the data fields being provided to ensure that no patient identifier is released. Pharmacists who are unable to do this directly may request their software vendor to conduct the review on their behalf and in these circumstances pharmacists must obtain, in writing, legally binding assurances, from the software vendor, that no patient identifier is released.

Before releasing individual prescriber/pharmacist/pharmacy data from prescription files to commercial data compilers, pharmacists must obtain, preferably in writing, the following assurances:

- The data compiler must have policies and procedures in place to ensure that individual prescriber/pharmacist/pharmacy profiles will not be disclosed to other parties without the individual prescriber's/pharmacist's/pharmacy's consent.
- The data compiler must have policies and procedures in place to ensure that data on non-consenting prescribers/pharmacists/pharmacies will be disclosed to other parties only in an aggregated form such that individual prescriber/pharmacist/pharmacy profiles cannot be identified.
- The data compiler must be able to provide written, audit-based, legally binding assurances that it is abiding by the above principles.

Where relevant provincial privacy legislation exists, commercial data compilers must collect prescription data in accordance with these legislation.