



8 February 2019

Subject: Enhanced Access to Private Sector Electronic Health Records

Formal Request:

The New Brunswick Chiropractors Association (NBCA), on behalf of its members, is requesting access to laboratory testing reports and specialists' reports to enhance chiropractors' ability to practice within our full scope of practice.

Issue:

Neuromusculoskeletal conditions are among the most prevalent and costliest conditions in New Brunswick, and one of the primary reasons for WSNB claims. Furthermore, neuromusculoskeletal conditions, including low back pain, are one of the leading reasons for short- and long-term disability. Hence, access to prompt, effective and safe conservative care options like chiropractic is essential to ensure a healthy and productive workforce. Granting greater access to vital health information would also lead to improved access and quality of care provided for New Brunswickers.

Chiropractors are extensively trained to assess, diagnose, prevent and manage neuromusculoskeletal conditions such as low back pain, neck pain and headaches. As diagnosticians, chiropractors perform a comprehensive health history and examination, and consider all available health information to be able to rule-in and rule-out potential cause of the pain or dysfunction. For example, back pain can result from dysfunction of the spine, but also can be caused by underlying pathology, referred from an organ, due to inflammatory disorder or even by underlying cancer. Hence, the ability to promptly access valuable patient health information including diagnostic imaging, laboratory testing and surgical reports would greatly enhance chiropractors' ability to promptly diagnose and manage patients' symptoms and dysfunctions or refer as needed.

In 2016, NB chiropractors were granted access to diagnostic imaging and radiological reports in accordance with the New Brunswick Department of Health vision of One Patient, One Record (OPOR). The ability to consult a patient's (after consent received) diagnostic images has greatly enhanced the ability of chiropractors to appropriately diagnose and manage patients' complaints. Greater access to complimentary information through laboratory testing and surgical reports would further enhance our ability to appropriately manage neuromusculoskeletal conditions, or to refer promptly if underlying pathology is suspected. Currently, access to relevant information can be burdensome in terms of time and resources for the system, providers and patients alike.

Scope of Practice of Chiropractors:

The practice of chiropractic in NB is defined as a primary care professional service performed by a chiropractor for the diagnosis, including diagnostic imaging, and for examination and treatment, principally by hand, and without the use of drugs or surgery, of the spinal column, pelvis, extremities and associated tissues.

As primary care and primary contact providers, patients access chiropractic care without the need for a referral. It is part of the core competencies of chiropractors to assess, diagnose, prevent and manage conditions, and to refer to other healthcare providers as appropriate. This includes the interpretation of laboratory testing and specialists' reports, as well as co-managing with other healthcare providers such as family physicians and medical specialists.

Opportunities:

The total public sector health expenditures make up the biggest share of the annual provincial budget, and only continue to rise. Compounded with a quickly aging population, the rising cost of health care is unsustainable. Hence, the focus must be better use of existing resources by focusing on providing appropriate care by the right provider.

Notably, low back pain is one of the primary reasons for visiting the emergency room and family doctors; however, the evidence clearly recommends the use of conservative care or self-management strategies as first-line. By allowing regulated health care providers, such as chiropractors, to practice within full scope will help to alleviate the burden on the public system while improving outcomes.

In addition, greater access for private sector providers would also further advance the Government's vision of One Patient, One Record (OPOR). The future of healthcare is shared records so that all providers involved in a patients' care. There is significant wasted resources and time caused by the lack of communication between providers and sharing the same records would be an appropriate way to help solve the issue.

Precedents:

Currently, there are a number of provinces that have provided extended access to patient information through their centralized portal including Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For example, Alberta chiropractors have access to Alberta Netcare (provincial EHR) through the viewer. The chiropractors have access to the patients' **demographic information, laboratory reports, specialist reports and diagnostic imaging**. Similarly, Saskatchewan chiropractors have access to the provincial EHR through the viewer. The information accessed includes the **laboratory results, information on medications and immunization, transcribed clinical information, diagnostic imaging reports and images, information on hospital visit and information regarding chronic disease management**.

Conclusion:

The New Brunswick Chiropractors Association, on behalf of its members, is requesting **access to laboratory testing reports and specialists' reports** to enhance our ability to practice within our full scope of practice. Greater access to patient health information would enhance our ability to appropriately diagnose and manage patients' complaints, while decreasing the burden on family physicians and hospitals to provide that information upon request. We believe that the future of healthcare is collaborative, and that had to extend to shared electronic health record.

Contact information:

For additional information, please contact the NBCA at (506) 455-6800 or by email at fleblanc@nbchiropratic.ca.