



- BRENDAN SEATON -

The COACH Guidelines: have you got your copy yet?

President, COACH: Canada's Health Informatics Association

Security and privacy are like the weather. Everyone talks about it. Few actually do anything about it. Its surprising that in an industry like health care, where everyone universally agrees that patient privacy and confidentiality are among the most important values we espouse, we have such a poor record of implementing comprehensive security and privacy programs. When we do, it is often in response to legislative mandates. Even then, health executives often do the minimum required to achieve compliance.

Well maybe it isn't too surprising. Health care is an industry unlike any other. It is an extremely complex business environment, and possibly the most information intensive sector of the economy. But most people who have access to confidential health records are governed by time-tested codes of ethics. We're culturally predisposed to security and privacy. In times past this has ensured a pretty good level of patient privacy.

But times have changed. Rapidly evolving technology, health care delivery methods, attitudinal changes concerning the acceptable uses of health information and economic pressures have exceeded the limits of current methods of data protection. Health care organizations need to implement comprehensive security and privacy programs that keep pace with the rapidly changing security and privacy landscape.

Health executives are challenged by new threats to health information, most notably from advances in technology and the rapidly expanding use of the Internet for health care purposes. Does the doctor logging into the hospital information system have a personal firewall and virus protection on his laptop? Can you positively authenticate who is accessing confidential health records? Do you have a rogue employee who has authorized access to every bit of patient information in the clinical record?

Executives are also challenged by client rights to control the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information, which are becoming enshrined in federal and provincial privacy legislation. This will drive changes to basic health care business and clinical processes, and will

challenge currently accepted business practices. Our use of health information is also constrained. Use of health information for management or research purposes now requires consideration of the rights of individuals and in many cases, their consent to those uses.

The recently revised COACH Guidelines for the Protection of Health Information provides a roadmap to help health executives develop and implement comprehensive security and privacy programs. Developed by working practitioners in the art of security and privacy from across Canada, they provide a complete and practical guide to addressing these issues. The guidelines explore all dimensions of the information security and privacy world including issues of people, processes, technology and the management of data. Each section includes "quick start" suggestions to enable organizations make economical and immediate improvements to their security and privacy programs.

For the past decade the COACH Guidelines have been the standard for the security and privacy of health information in Canada. They have been recognized around the world as a definitive reference in this complex field. The revised guidelines address the security and privacy issues facing health executives and health organizations today.

Have you got your copy of the COACH Guidelines yet? Contact the COACH office or visit our website - www.coachorg.com.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Brendan Seaton
PRIVA-C (A Division of CareLink, Inc.)
Fredericton, NB
Tel: 416.450.4922
E-mail: brendans@carelink.ca

VICE PRESIDENT

Gil Sampson
Feronia Group
Gold River, BC
Tel: 250.283.9190
E-mail: gsampson@island.net

SECRETARY TREASURER

Don Newsham
Sierra Systems Consulting
Edmonton, AB
Tel: 780.424.0852
E-mail: donnewsham@sierrasystems.com

PAST PRESIDENT

Patricia Jeselon
Pat Jeselon & Associates
Consulting, Inc.
Toronto, ON
Tel: 416.486.6442
E-mail: patjeselon@rogers.com

DIRECTORS

Shelagh Maloney, Toronto ON
Dr. Matthew Morgan, Toronto ON
Michael Nusbaum, Victoria BC

COACH NATIONAL OFFICE

Andrew Parr
Executive Director
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1304
Toronto, ON M5B 1J3
Tel: 416.979.5551
Toll Free: 1.888.253.8554
Fax: 416.979.1144
E-mail: info@coachorg.com
Web Site: www.coachorg.com

COACH PATRONS



Baycrest Centre
for Geriatric Care



Health Canada
Santé Canada