

# Mandate patient access to primary care medical records

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Canada's provincial governments should mandate patient access to their electronic medical records, argue authors of a commentary in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*)

"[W]e believe that Canada's [provincial governments](#) should mandate patient portals of access to [electronic medical records](#), as such a commitment to health information transparency would herald a new era in patient empowerment," write Dr. Iris Gorfinkel, PrimeHealth Clinical Research—Family Practice, and Dr. Joel Lexchin, Faculty of Health, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

Although the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1993 that patients have the right to their personal health information, patients face obstacles to accessing primary care records, such as filling out authorization forms, fees and long waits.

Most [family](#) physicians use electronic medical records, yet it is difficult for other clinicians to access information on their patients. Some hospitals have electronic portals, such as MyChart, which allow patients to access information on results, reports and other information.

Physician workloads, government funding, costs, security and use by patients not technologically adept are some challenges to be addressed.

"Fully patient-centred care can begin only when patients are able to access their primary care records and share them with their physicians

when most needed. Without this ability, patients and their families suffer needlessly, physicians are less effective and the cost-effectiveness of our universal health system is diminished."

**More information:** Iris Gorfinkel et al. A call to mandate patient access to personal primary care medical records across Canada, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2018). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.180522](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.180522)

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