

Ministry of Health

**Assistant Deputy Minister
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May 5, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health

RE: Emergency Order authorizing Public Health Unit (PHU) access to the Electronic Health Record (EHR)

The purpose of this memo is to provide you with an update on continuing measures to restrict the progress and spread of the COVID-19 virus across the province, including declaring an emergency to ensure that the province is using every avenue possible to continue to protect the health and safety of all individuals and families in Ontario.

The Ministry of Health has received approval for an emergency order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMPCA) authorizing coroners and PHUs, including Medical Officers of Health (MOH) and the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), to access to the provincial Electronic Health Record (EHR), to prevent, respond to and alleviate the COVID-19 outbreak.

This access is to real-time information in the EHR, which contains the most up-to-date laboratory and clinical information across the province (i.e., real-time COVID-19 lab test results). This order will increase the timeliness and completeness of the information PHUs have available to them to support COVID-19 pandemic management. The order also enables appropriate public health use of the information held in the EHR, including confirmation of individuals' personal information and identification, e.g. patient's address.

This new access authority is in line with legislative amendments already passed in Bill 188, which will be proclaimed into force later in 2020. In the meantime, this order will address the immediate requirements of our health system. The order is intended to be temporary and access to the EHR information for HPPA purposes would expire on May 15; however, if the province's emergency status is extended there is the potential that the emergency order would be extended to align with that timeline.

Ontario Health will be implementing access to the EHR for the Medical Officers of Health and CMOH for the purposes of the emergency order.

If you have any questions about access to the EHR as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, please contact Angela Lianos at angela.lianos@ehealthontario.on.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Hein". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Greg Hein,
Assistant Deputy Minister
Digital Health Division

c: Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health