

October 2007

Dear Health Care Practitioner:

Like many other jurisdictions, Ontario is making it a priority to move its health system away from paper-based toward electronic record-keeping. In the weeks and months to come, you will be hearing about an early step that Ontario is taking to improve the way patient health records are managed. I am writing to tell you a little about that initiative, and also to ask for your help.

The Ontario Laboratories Information System, or OLIS, is a new system that will electronically connect medical labs and link them with the practitioners who ordered the tests and need the results. Lab results for patients will be electronically fed into a secure central server. They will then be available to the physicians named on the original requisition as well as to other practitioners providing care to those patients. OLIS will also act as an ongoing repository for patient test result history. And once fully implemented, it will provide the health care system with a centralized system of electronic test ordering.

It is important to understand that we are at the beginning of a very gradual implementation process. Rolling this initiative out all at once would be neither practical nor prudent. Instead, we are taking a carefully planned series of steps involving a small group of hospitals and private laboratories, referred to as Foundation Adopters. The first step is for the foundation adopters to begin sending their results into the OLIS system. To start this process, three foundation adopter hospitals, Grey Bruce Health Services, Trillium Health Centre and Lakeridge Health, began sending their lab results into OLIS earlier this year.

Over the course of the next few months, four more foundation adopters – three community laboratories and the University Health Network – will come aboard. The first of the three labs is Gamma-Dynacare, which is one of the largest community laboratories in Ontario, handling 15 per cent of all lab tests done in the province. Gamma-Dynacare will begin sending lab results into OLIS in November, and I am writing to you because many of your patients use Gamma-Dynacare.

We need your help for OLIS to work. Just as the long-term success of OLIS depends on the foundation adopters, it also depends on the willingness of health providers to be part of the adoption system. We are sending you copies of an information brochure to make available to your patients. Included with the brochure is a form that is of great importance to the success and viability of this program.

From the day OLIS was conceived, one of the most challenging issues has been the need to honour a patient's desire for privacy. For this reason, the e-Health Program worked with health care stakeholders – among them the Ontario Medical Association – to develop policies and procedures that will enable patients to exercise their legal right, under the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*, to keep their health records private.

The solution devised is a brief form – called a *Restricting Access Form* – that is part of the information brochure we are sending you. It will go into use on November 19, 2007. The form, if completed by the patient, must be attached to the paper laboratory requisition. It stipulates that only the ordering physician and any practitioner named on the lab test order can see the results.

The form will be made available to patients at specimen collection centres and on the Internet. We are also asking you to make it available in your office for those patients whose specimens are collected there. We don't regard it likely that patients will choose to cut themselves off from the benefits of an increasingly effective system by signing the form, but in situations where they do, we are asking your office to make sure it is attached to the laboratory requisition.

As I mentioned earlier, OLIS is being developed very gradually and it's fair to say that not much is going to change in the short term. But over time, we expect it will become a critical resource to you in providing care for your patients. You will be hearing more about how this will happen in the coming months.

Below you will find contact information for the OLIS INFOline. OLIS INFOline staff will respond to questions from you and your patients. We are grateful for your support as we move forward with this exciting and important initiative. Thank you for being part of the adoption process.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail Paech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

Gail Paech  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
e-Health Program Lead

### **OLIS INFOline**

For information, answers to questions from you or your patients, or to obtain more patient brochures/forms, contact the OLIS INFOline from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.:

Toll free: 1-800-291-1406

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

e-mail: [OLIS.MOH@Ontario.ca](mailto:OLIS.MOH@Ontario.ca)

website: [www.health.gov.on.ca/olis](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/olis)