

# Retention Periods for Medical Records

SMA has been receiving queries from our members on how long they need to keep medical records. We therefore wrote to the Ministry of Health (MOH) to seek clarification on behalf of our members. Please refer to the following correspondence between SMA and MOH.

28 February 2014

A/Prof Benjamin Ong  
Director of Medical Services  
Ministry of Health

Dear A/Prof Ong,

## Retention period for medical records

We have received several queries from our members on how long medical records should be kept.

The Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics (PHMC) Act, under Regulation 12(3), mentions the following:

*"The records referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be retained by the licensee of the private hospital, medical clinic, clinical laboratory or healthcare establishment for such periods as may be required by the Director."*

The other document that we are aware of, an MOH circular dated back in 1996, does mention retention periods, but is overly complicated and could be confusing for the profession to comply.

The SMA believes that clarification and simplification from the Ministry regarding this area will help to ensure understanding and compliance by the medical profession.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Tammy Chan**  
Honorary Secretary  
Singapore Medical Association

25 March 2014

Dr Tammy Chan  
Honorary Secretary  
Singapore Medical Association

Dear Dr Chan,

## Re: Retention period for medical records

We thank you for your letter dated 28 February 2014.

We are presently studying the issue of the retention periods for medical records, with a view to the possibility of issuing guidance to the medical profession on this issue subsequently.

In the meantime, while no retention periods for medical records have been prescribed under Regulation 12(3) of the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Regulations, the profession may wish to take reference from the Limitation Act and the timeframes reflected there within which legal proceedings may be brought.

Yours sincerely,

**A/Prof Benjamin Ong**  
Director of Medical Services  
Ministry of Health

Based on MOH's reply, we advise members to refer to the Limitation Act at <http://goo.gl/qy8quf>. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank members who provided feedback on this issue. If you have further comments, do email us at [sma@sma.org.sg](mailto:sma@sma.org.sg). ■