



NEHR:

Will These Changes Make A Difference?

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This reply was submitted in response to a letter published in the January 2018 issue of SMA News (<https://goo.gl/EC5xxJ>).

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I would like to thank Dr Lee Pheng Soon for clarifying the ethical rights of the patient with regard to the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR).

Would the following changes made to the present status of the NEHR help in any way to eradicate the anxiety and ambiguity surrounding patients' rights?

1. There should never be access to any raw data in the NEHR unless for forensic examinations or detailed research studies.
2. The information in the NEHR should be treated as confidentially as our Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts or Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore records; ie, the patient would be able to print and submit the information to the caregiver as per printing out the CPF relevant statement when buying a house.
3. This means that the useful information in the NEHR should be carefully summarised and recorded for the above purpose.
4. Another way, perhaps, is to treat the information as if it is in a safe deposit box with both the patient and the caregiver holding separate keys or tokens. They must be used concurrently to access the summarised records, unless in an emergency when a master key is used.
5. The information collected earlier without the patients' well-informed consent (ie, ALL NEHR records) should not be included unless freshly authorised by the patients, but they should be kept for the purpose of forensic examinations or research studies.
6. Finally, no research should be done without proper consent. ◆