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SASKATCHEWAN CANCER AGENCY

CANCER AGENCY WORKING TO STRENGTHEN PATIENT PRIVACY

After recent privacy breaches, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is working to further strengthen the privacy of patients' health information and to ensure staff understand their role in accessing personal health information from various electronic systems.

"The privacy of patient information is something we take very seriously," said Scott Livingstone, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. "We appreciate that patients have put their information in the care of our healthcare professionals and we deeply regret that we have not maintained their privacy."

The Cancer Agency learned of the privacy breaches in May of 2015 and began a detailed inquiry. The investigation revealed that over a six month period two employees had viewed the health information of 48 individuals they were not providing care for. The information viewed included an individual's name, address, phone number, date of birth, health services number as well as information about diagnostic tests, medical exams, clinical results, diagnoses and physician names.

The Cancer Agency has informed all the individuals involved of the breach to their privacy and disciplinary action has been taken against the employees. The Cancer Agency has informed the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner and will work with them to ensure appropriate follow up occurs.

"As a result of the incidents we need to do a better job of informing our staff of their obligation and responsibility towards patient privacy," Livingstone said.

Over the last several years the Cancer Agency has put a number of policies and procedures in place to safeguard information and continuously made privacy training available to employees. To strengthen this work, the Cancer Agency is developing a plan to further raise awareness of the responsibility employees have in accessing personal health information, including:

- Mandatory attendance at new employee orientation for all new staff
- Onboarding/department orientation checklist that will include privacy as a component
- Changes to the confidentiality policy to include a statement around the use of systems that contain personal health information
- Ongoing department training offered by the Cancer Agency's privacy officer
- Investigating the possibility of an on-line privacy module that all employees must complete and that could be repeated as needed
- Ongoing monitoring and auditing employee access to the systems containing patient information

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Media availability: Scott Livingstone, President and Chief Executive Officer will be available to respond to questions on July 20, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in the boardroom on the second floor located at 4545 Parliament Avenue Regina, Saskatchewan. Media can also ask questions during this time by calling 1-888-289-4573 access code 1907314

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