Professional Notice

To: Pharmacy Practitioners
From: Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists
Date: August 2, 2018
Re: DIS Privacy Breaches

The NSCP recently addressed privacy breaches that occurred in two separate community pharmacies. Both involved pharmacy practitioners viewing personal health information in the Drug Information System (DIS) without a valid clinical reason. These matters were sent to the Hearing Committee in July and the resulting decisions are posted on the NSCP website.

The Drug Information System is a central component of the province’s strategy to provide optimal healthcare to Nova Scotians. It is important that the public has confidence in the integrity of the pharmacy profession to respect the confidentiality of their personal health information contained within the DIS. They trust that the profession will use this information to ensure the appropriateness of their drug therapy, and that the profession will only access it when it is needed to provide them with pharmacy care. These breaches have provided an opportunity for the profession to learn how to better ensure it does not violate this trust:

1. The Office of the Information and Privacy Officer (OIPC) has posted the results of their investigation into the breaches. OIPC has made several recommendations for improvements in the processes used by pharmacies to safeguard patients’ personal health information (Investigation Report IR 18-02); a summary of these recommendations can be found on pages 26-28 of this report on the investigation into the pharmacy.

   Pharmacy owners and registrants are advised to review and action the OIPC’s recommendations proactively.

2. As professionals, pharmacy practitioners must hold each other accountable for providing quality care and conducting themselves professionally.

   Pharmacy practitioners are reminded that they must not ignore or condone professional misconduct of any kind, and that they have an ethical duty to report such concerns promptly so that they can be addressed.

The NSCP recognizes that it is very rare that a pharmacy practitioner would betray this trust, but the public’s confidence can be quickly eroded by a few incidents. This trust is foundational to an effective patient-pharmacist relationship.