

Position Statement

Patient Portals for Laboratory Based Health Information

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) supports the use of online health information portals for providing laboratory testing results and relevant information to patients and care givers. It is the expectation that a portal should allow users to be engaged and active participants in health care matters, promote health literacy, increase transparency of the medical health record for the individual, as well as support new access to care models.

Although scientific and policy literature suggests positive outcomes and experiences for patient portal users, further verification of this is required in addition to continued monitoring of safety and risk issues as technology evolves and information pathways change. At this time, CSMLS recognizes the current and potential value of patient portals, and will continue to support their implementation unless future research identifies significant issues or concerns.

CSMLS has a key role in promoting the fundamental standards of laboratory patient portals across Canada. It is expected that these portals should achieve the following:

- **Voluntary Requirement:** Usage of patient portals should be voluntary and not a requirement of the patient or caregiver. Access to traditional or alternative methods of information seeking should be maintained in order to accommodate the needs of all.
- **Access to Information:** Patient portal users should be provided with access to timely laboratory testing information with supplementary educational material.
- **Collaborative Communication:** The portal should be designed in a manner that promotes discussion between the user and health care provider(s), and should not act as the final step in the health information pathway.
- **Privacy:** Technology- and process-based security measures to safeguard privacy should be maintained at all times and guarantee minimal exposure risk for patient portal users.
- **Monitoring:** A system should be implemented and maintained to examine indicators that monitor user and health care team engagement, experience and collaborative communication, in addition to health literacy considerations and security measures.
- **Integration with Health Records:** Where possible, patient portals should integrate with existing health records to avoid the fragmentation of patient data.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** The development of a patient portal should include consultation with appropriate subject matter experts. Particular attention must be paid to what information is

appropriate to deliver through a patient portal and consideration of any potential harm associated with providing that information through a portal.

References:

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Kruse CS, Bolton K, & Freriks G (2015). The effect of patient portals on quality outcomes and its implications to meaningful use: A systematic review. *Medical Internet Research*, 17(2), e41.