

NEWS RELEASE

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Auditor General finds serious weaknesses in security of clinical information system

VICTORIA – An audit of the clinical information system used by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority found serious security weaknesses, says Auditor General John Doyle. The results of the audit were released today in a report titled *The PARIS System for Community Care Services: Access and Security*.

“Maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of individuals’ health care records is profoundly important, so it was of great concern when our examination revealed grave deficiencies in the security of this system,” said Doyle.

The Primary Access Regional Information System (PARIS) is used by the health authority in providing community health care services to more than 620,000 residents of the region. Clients of home and residential care, mental health and addictions services, and health promotion, among others, have their information recorded in PARIS. The audit examined several key areas of the system and found serious weaknesses in each one. Significant findings included:

- System access is not granted on a “need-to-know” basis. All 4,000 users were found to have excessive access to sensitive and confidential client information. In some instances, this included clients’ full health information.
- The system lacked essential security controls needed to detect and prevent unauthorized access or attacks.
- There is a risk that inappropriate disclosure or theft of information could take place without VCHA’s knowledge.

Given the severity of the situation, Doyle is pleased at the significant effort VCHA demonstrated in addressing many of the problems.

“The adoption of a comprehensive and strategic approach to information security is critical for securing the environment and protecting sensitive personal information,” said Doyle. “I would encourage other organizations in the health industry and similar sectors to review the report, as our findings and recommendations should be useful to them as well.”

The report is available at www.bcauditor.com.

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2009/10 Report #7 – The Paris System for Community Care Services: Access and Security

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