

President's Letter

June 3, 2011

NLMA endorses Central, Western confidentiality policies

Dear Colleagues:

The NLMA has now had the opportunity to discuss with Central and Western Health our concerns about the confidentiality oaths and affirmations that physicians have been asked to sign in accordance with the new *Personal Health Information Act*.

Both health authorities have addressed the concerns we have raised to our satisfaction. Specifically, there is recognition and acknowledgement that physicians have, in certain instances, a professional obligation to advocate publically on matters concerning medical care. There is a concurrent obligation to do so in a responsible manner by initially channeling concerns to the appropriate administration.

We therefore endorse the policies of both Central and Western Health, and advise physicians in those two regions to sign the confidentiality agreements. Physicians who may have signed earlier versions of the oaths which do not contain provisions referencing our professional obligation as patient advocates are advised to ask to sign the revised document.

Physicians with Labrador-Grenfell Health are asked to refrain from signing any confidentiality documents until we have had the opportunity to review and discuss that region's policy.

Regards,

Patrick O'Shea, MD, CCFP, FCFP