December 12, 2018

Important Update:

Measures to investigate and address an inadvertent disclosure of personal information

On November 13, 2018, the Royal College learned that basic personal information for some members and residents was accessible through Google for a period of time. Following the discovery, we immediately engaged the services of external cybersecurity experts to investigate the situation and to ensure that the data has since been completely removed from Google.

The Royal College sincerely regrets any inconvenience or concerns this may have created for our impacted members and residents.

On December 12, 2018, we have reached out individually to impacted Fellows by email to inform them of what personal data may have been inadvertently disclosed. We will be reaching out to impacted residents by December 14, 2018.

Results of the investigation

The external cybersecurity experts found that

- Limited data about some members was inadvertently disclosed and made temporarily accessible by Google search between September 14, 2018 and November 13, 2018.

- No banking, credit card or resident assessment information was disclosed.

- The disclosure was caused by human error – a misconfiguration was made during a recent upgrade that unintentionally changed data access permissions, making information available by Google.

- Our external cybersecurity experts confirmed there was no evidence of targeted or systematic “searches and clicks” by automatic search robots trying to access the information. They determined that the accessible information received limited activity. Our investigation has not discovered any malicious intent. The incident was not caused by an external individual or hacker purposefully trying to access data or do harm.
For Fellows, the disclosed information was archived internal help desk data from 2009 to 2016. Of note, 96% of the records were from 2014 or earlier.

Note: User information in MAINPORT ePortfolio or Resident ePortfolio (including individual assessments) is secure and not part of this incident. MAINPORT users should feel comfortable entering MOC credits into the system.

Steps taken, future precautions

On November 26, 2018, we filed a voluntary disclosure of this incident to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

We will continue to work with our IT department, as well as cybersecurity experts, to implement enhanced procedural safeguards in all situations dealing with personal information. In addition, we will perform enhanced security assessments on the impacted applications and our systems, as well as ongoing training for our teams.

Our sincere apologies

The Royal College sincerely regrets the inadvertent disclosure of this personal information. We take the privacy, security and safety of our members and residents’ personal information very seriously.

If you have any questions, please contact privacy@royalcollege.ca or contact our Membership Services Centre at 1-800-461-9598. We have extended business hours of the Membership Services Centre to answer calls from 8:00 am – 7:00 pm EST from December 12-14, 2018. Please note that the Royal College will close on December 21 and will reopen on January 2, 2018.

Sincerely,

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