



The Maryland State Medical Society

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY HOUSE OF
DELEGATES

PRIVACY PROTECTIONS FOR MEDICALLY RELATED INTERNET SEARCHES

The HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) Privacy Rule applies to health plans, health care clearinghouses, and to any health care provider who transmits health information in electronic form in connection with transactions for which the Secretary of HHS has adopted standards under HIPAA (the “covered entities”).

Additionally, HIPAA laws aim to “protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge”, and since Internet search providers track and profit from the browsing history of their customers with an estimated 72% of internet use users in the United States have searched online for health information, mostly through search engines, such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo;

It has been resolved that it be MedChi’s policy that internet service providers and other interested parties should not access, utilize, or profit from health-related browser histories.

Moreover, MedChi supports efforts to educate members of the public on how to use browser specific or machine-specific privacy functions to protect searches about potentially privileged health information.