Why you need an AHS email account?

The use of secure electronic communication systems is advocated by both the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta [CPSA] in Advice to the Profession1 and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner [OIPC].2

Currently, the University of Alberta email system [Gmail] does not have a privacy impact assessment [PIA] that would support its use for the transmission and receipt of confidential patient information; therefore it should not be used for these purposes.

The Alberta Health Services (AHS) email is secure and may be used for communication of confidential health information if:

- AHS email policies and procedures are followed
  - Note: As per AHS Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, AHS email cannot be automatically forwarded to external email sites without AHS IT approval (i.e. one cannot forward AHS email to U of A Gmail or any other non-AHS email)
  - [https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-pol-it-acceptable-use.pdf](https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-pol-it-acceptable-use.pdf)
- emails are sent from an AHS email account to other AHS email accounts
- emails are sent from AHS email accounts to external accounts using the Private functionality in the subject line that subsequently provides adequate encryption

Physicians with AHS medical staff privileges are eligible for an AHS email account. Some may be unaware that they already have an account, or do not access this account on a regular basis. AHS may also send out important information via AHS email that might not be sent to a U of A email account.

The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry encourages its members to ensure their AHS email account is functioning, and review the AHS documents around its use at [http://handbook.ahs-cis.ca?=ecommunication](http://handbook.ahs-cis.ca?=ecommunication).

The FoMD is also working towards medical residents and students having AHS email accounts so that secure communication containing confidential patient information can be done entirely within the AHS email system (i.e. AHS email accounts to AHS email accounts) as part of clinical care such as for inpatient teams, or consult services etc.

Important information may be coming from the University of Alberta, including the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry using University email (Gmail) and from AHS using AHS email. It is important to check the email account respective to each institution frequently to ensure you are reviewing all of your messages.

*Note: University of Alberta email should be used for University business.*
References:
