



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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China: Information about how patient records are maintained in China, particularly in the province of Liaoning
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In a 27 July 2009 interview with the Research Directorate, two officials with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ottawa indicated that patients with less serious illnesses can go to medical clinics or hospitals for diagnosis and treatment; in these cases, medical clinics and hospitals issue booklets to patients to record the nature of the illness and the recommended treatment. The Officials explained that the booklet can be used for multiple visits and is kept by the patient (China 27 July 2009).

When illnesses are more serious, individuals are admitted to hospitals for diagnosis and treatment; in these cases, the medical records are very detailed and include information on symptoms (body temperature), physical exams, diagnosis and treatment (ibid.). When patients are discharged from the hospital, they receive a summary report, which usually outlines the patient's symptoms, diagnosis and treatment (ibid.). The original summary report is automatically given to the patient, while the hospital retains a copy (ibid.). Additionally, the Officials indicated that patients can request a photocopy of their full medical record and that hospitals archive records for up to ten years (ibid.). Lastly, the Officials stated that this system of recording medical information is followed throughout China, including the province of Liaoning (ibid.).

A lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who has published numerous journal articles on the social exclusion of migrants in China, stated in 20 July 2009 correspondence that there are "no formal medical records for patients in China." The Lecturer explained that "each patient is supposed to keep a booklet themselves," which they present upon each visit to a doctor (20 July 2009). If the patient's visit includes the use of equipment, the booklet will contain "a note showing the results and a receipt showing the price" (Lecturer 20 July 2009). In further correspondence, the Lecturer noted that the booklet "may look different in different cities" (Lecturer 21 July 2009).

An emeritus librarian at McGill University who once worked at China Medical University as a research librarian indicated in 20 July 2009 correspondence that hospitals vary significantly across China, including some hospitals that operate as university teaching hospitals and others in small rural townships that are run by "semi-trained" healthcare staff. The Emeritus Librarian indicated that it is unlikely that hospital records are maintained in a standard way in China (20 July 2009). Similar information is provided in an interview published on

MedHunters.com, an employment website that produces a newsletter on healthcare (n.d.a), where an obstetrician practising in Beijing noted that "hospital structures are vastly different from place to place" in China (n.d.b). The same obstetrician co-authored an article published in *China Briefing*, indicating that "[a]s far as hospital management is concerned, China has not developed a cadre of professional non-physician managers like those found in the United States and Canada" (Mar. 2006).

In an article entitled "Healthcare in China," a senior research analyst at the IBM Institute for Business Value, which offers consulting services and publishes research on multiple global industries (n.d.), indicates that "within China's very complex healthcare system... there is a lack of integrated health policies that apply to all hospitals" (2006, 5). The Analyst indicates that healthcare service regulations are "largely decentralized" in China and that hospitals are "managed by a multitude of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, provincial and city governments, military, and even large state enterprises that continue to operate their own hospitals" (IBM 2006, 5). The article indicates that plans for national healthcare infrastructure development in China involve several "pilot regional healthcare systems" that offer "digital services, integration with insurance, referral systems [and] electronic records" (ibid., 6).

In another article focused on healthcare reform in China, the President of Network Dynamics Associates, "a management consulting and project development firm that provides strategic direction to the global telecommunications and information networking industry" (n.d.), notes that hospital spending in China is "highly decentralized," leading to "limited interoperability" between various facilities in terms of technical systems (Apr. 2009, 3). The article further indicates that "[o]nly the largest, wealthiest and most sophisticated hospitals have expanded their information systems to include... electronic patient records" (Network Dynamics Associates Apr. 2009). However, hospitals associated with the People's Liberation Army are reportedly an exception in that they have a "unified technological approach for many IT platforms and services" (ibid., 4). The article states that as citizens' mobility increases within China, the need for nationwide healthcare administration standards will increase, since it is now reportedly "virtually impossible for a person from one province to gain access to medical reimbursements, social security, [and] pensions" in another province (ibid., 5).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

China. 27 July 2009. Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Ottawa. Interview with two officials.

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_____. N.d. "Network Dynamics Associates." <<http://www.ndaventures.com/drupal/>> [Accessed 28 July 2009]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources: The People's Hospital of Liaoning Province in Shenyang, The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative Office in Beijing, the Population Investigation Committee (PIC) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Doctors Without Borders in New York and Toronto, a professor of International Affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the China Medical Board (Cambridge, MA) did not have information concerning this Request.

The Ministry of Health in China, the China Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham (UK), Human Rights in China (HRIC), the Chinese Canadian Medical Society (CCMS), the Chinese American Medical Society (CAMS), the Centre for Health Management and Policy at Shandong University, the Population Reference Bureau, the Affiliated Hospital of Liaoning University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the American Medical Center in Shenyang, a professor at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and three doctors practising at the United Family Hospital in Guangzhou did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

Attempts to contact the No. 2 Hospital of China Medical University in Shenyang, the First Hospital of China Medical University in Shenyang, the No. 1 Hospital of Dalian Medical University, the Dalian Railway Hospital, the Dalian Friendship Hospital and the China Medical Board in Beijing were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: The Center for Health Policy and Management at

Shandong Medical University, *The China Business Review* [Washington, DC], China Today, the Chinese Canadian Medical Society (CCMS), Chindex International Inc., *The Economist* [London], *Global Health Governance* [South Orange, New Jersey], International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* [Ann Arbor, Michigan], the Ministry of Health in China, Population Reference Bureau, Radio Free Asia (RFA), United States (US) Library of Congress, Xinhua News Agency, *Yale-China Health Journal* [New Haven, Connecticut].

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