

**Sexual history no longer taken for morning after pill
Pharmacists agree to drop controversial form****Privacy commissioner read of screening in Star****Dec. 8, 2005. 01:00 AM****ELAINE CAREY****MEDICAL REPORTER**

Ontario pharmacists will be asked to stop collecting sensitive information about a woman's sexual activity before they dispense the so-called morning after pill.

The Ontario College of Pharmacists agreed yesterday to advise pharmacists not to use a controversial screening form to collect the information after privacy commissioner Ann Cavoukian complained following a report in the *Toronto Star* last week.

The form, which pharmacists gave women to fill out, asked for their name, address, phone number, the date and time they last had unprotected sex, the number of times they had unprotected sex since their last menstrual period and what form of birth control they used. Pharmacists stored the information in their computers.

Cavoukian said in an interview she was unaware of the form until she read about it in the *Star* and "I was taken aback. It struck me that a lot of information that was being collected was very personal. It looked excessive and I was alarmed."

The Ontario Personal Health Information Act specifies that no personal identifiable data be collected and "if you must collect it, you collect the absolute minimum," she said. "It's a fundamental principle in privacy.

"You can ask questions but you don't record it," she said. "You don't need those things."

The form was part of voluntary guidelines issued by the Canadian Pharmacists Association last April when the emergency contraceptive levonorgestrel, or Plan B, was moved from a prescription drug to a behind-the-counter or schedule 2 drug.

If the pharmacists' association had consulted with any Canadian privacy commissioners, "we would immediately have raised these concerns,"

she said. "I'm sure all the other provinces will be reviewing this."

Abby Lippman, chair of the Canadian Women's Health Council, which is lobbying to have the pill made an over-the-counter drug so it can be made even more widely available to women, said she was delighted by the news.

"So long as Plan B is a schedule 2 drug we want to make sure there are no further hurdles in the way of getting it," she said in an interview.

Jane Pepino, chair of the Ontario Women's Health Council, called it "a good first step but Plan B must end up in front of the counter. We wanted women to have access to it without the kind of demeaning and intrusive questions such as the ones that had been asked. Thankfully, pharmacists have acceded to the request."

Representatives of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and the Ontario College of Pharmacists acknowledged in a statement issued by Cavoukian's office that the screening form "should be replaced by made-in-Ontario guidelines that comply with the requirements of health privacy legislation in Ontario."

The two organizations agreed to form a working group with the Ontario Privacy Commissioner's office to develop guidelines to deal with the drug "in a privacy sensitive manner."

Deb Faltmarche, vice-president of policy for the pharmacists' association, said the groups responded quickly to the privacy commissioner's concerns and "we will be working quickly on an Ontario solution to a concern that has been raised.

"But pharmacists deal with privacy issues every day," she said. "This isn't any different than any other over the counter or prescription drug."

Cavoukian said the response of the two organizations "has been very positive. I said 'Let's work together but I don't want another collection tool being developed.' I don't want individuals feeling they have to provide all this information in order to get the drug."