

MEDICAL RECORDS PRIVACY

1 Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, continues to be concerned  
2 about the confidentiality of individuals' medical records and private health information.

3

4 The recent mapping of the human genome and the continuing advancement of medical  
5 research technology are allowing the scientific and medical communities to find the cause  
6 and treatment of disease at an ever increasing pace. While these advances offer great  
7 hope for the eventual discovery of cures for many now-fatal diseases, the systems for  
8 transmitting this information—via the internet, E-mail and other mechanisms—may  
9 threaten the privacy of individuals' medical records. Health records, which were once  
10 available only at a family doctor's office, are now accessible to health insurers,  
11 pharmacists, state public health organizations, life insurance companies and even  
12 employers, often without the patient's knowledge or consent, leaving the patient  
13 vulnerable to discrimination.

14

15 Currently, no federal law specifically protects the confidentiality of medical information,  
16 and state protections vary widely.

17

18 Therefore, Hadassah urges Congress and state legislatures to pass strong legislation that  
19 protects the privacy of medical records and health information.