

I've had several people ask me about the Georgia Prescription Drug Monitoring Program. Here are some of the legalities and concerns you need to be aware of if you subscribe to this website.

This website is intended to be an individual tool to help you, as a doctor, personally decide you should prescribe a controlled substance to a patient. The information cannot be shared with other treatment providers, with employees in the office, etc. If the information is disclosed to others, it can be a felony.

So, if you suspected a patient was seeking drugs, you could look up the patient's name on the website, and if that person had gotten 6 scripts in the past week, you could personally decide not to prescribe to that patient. You could not report that person to the local pharmacy or other doctors; if you do, that is a potential felony. You could tell the pharmacist that you're going to look that patient up on the PDMP website and suggest they do the same, so long as you're not disclosing any information about the patient and any drugs he may have gotten and where they were obtained.

On the other hand, if you have a patient who wants a prescription, and you think they are getting prescriptions from other doctors, you can call the local pharmacist and/or doctor and ask if he'd filled any prescriptions for that patient. The pharmacist can tell you without it being a problem. That is fine.

Under HIPAA, you are allowed to converse with any other provider of medical services for that patient so long as it is for treatment purposes. Determining what medications a patient is taking is necessary to render the proper treatment to the patient, so you are allowed to get whatever information you need without the patient's authorization and share it with other treatment providers.

So, basically, if the information comes from the PDMP website, the information is for your use only; you can't talk about it to other health care professionals, employees, or anyone else. If the info comes from another health care provider, such as a pharmacist or another doctor, it can be discussed among the providers rendering dental/medical treatment, so long as it's for treatment purposes.

Contact the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency for questions at: 404-656-5100 or <http://gdna.georgia.gov/prescribers> for clarification and further information.