

# The Gazette

## New website offers information on Quebec's health system



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Can a prisoner be allowed starve herself to death?

The answer to this and dozens of questions for anyone getting services from the Quebec health system are now freely available on a new website compiled and launched by one of the province's leading malpractice lawyers, Jean-Pierre Ménard.

After [Sonia Blanchette](#), the Quebec mother charged with killing her three young children, died in a hospital last week after refusing to eat, Ménard said he was bombarded by questions from the media asking how authorities could allow such a thing to happen?

Without naming the woman, Ménard said that she was judged able to give consent to treatment. Food is considered treatment and since she understood the consequences, her rights were upheld

Financed by the Ménard Martin law firm, the online legal resource, [VosDroitsEnSanté.com](#), took 15 years to put together. After 34 years of defending patients' rights, Ménard said he's come to the conclusion that few — including administrators, physicians and nurses — have information about their rights and obligations.

The goal is to give patients and caregivers a tool to “reappropriate control over their lives, the decision-making power over their health care,” Ménard said. “What could be more important than our health? We are all future patients.”

Set up in user-friendly sections, it has frequently asked questions on five major health issues: access to medical files, services at a health facility, consenting to care, mental health and end-of-life care. It will cover wide-ranging health issues — ethics, privacy,

fees, the structure of the public health system — that are scattered and otherwise hard to find.

This is more important than ever, Ménard said, as Quebec is on the verge of adopting Bill 10, among other legislations enacted to overhaul the way the health care system is managed and delivered. The website will be revised and kept up-to-date with a “news section” as legislations and rulings that could affect users’ rights evolve.

Ménard is a harsh critic of Bill 10. More than a structural overhaul, it fails “on transparency, independence and accountability of the network,” Ménard wrote in a letter to Quebec Health Minister Gaétan Barrette.

Various patients’ advocate and rights groups welcomed the project. Gabriel Dupuis of the Quebec Council for the Protection of Patients said the site will contribute to educating many who don’t know their rights.

“It’s a gold mine of information,” said Doris Provencher, head of a provincial umbrella organization that defends patients’ rights in issues of mental health. “We feel this site was made with the patient in mind.”

Charles Bernard, president and CEO of the Collège des médecins du Québec, called it a great initiative, a remarkable effort by Ménard. “It’s to his credit and we are grateful,” Bernard said, but it’s also a private website run by a law firm. Beyond providing basic information on the legal aspects of health, it will comment on politics and legislation, he said, and that’s subjective.

The website is in French with English translations to come slowly.