

# Google healthcare project targeted by Congress committee

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A US congressional committee on Monday asked for a briefing on a Google project to modernize healthcare while giving the internet titan access to millions of people's medical data.

Energy and Commerce Committee leaders sent letters to the chiefs of Google and its partner in the [project](#), US health systems non-profit Ascension, requesting to be briefed by December 6.

The California-based internet giant last week revealed a project code-named "Nightingale," evidently in tribute to Florence Nightingale, whose nursing work during the Crimean War in the 1850s is credited with turning such work into a profession.

"We are happy to cooperate with any questions about the project," Google said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"We believe Google's work with Ascension adheres to industry-wide regulations (including HIPAA) regarding patient data and comes with strict guidance on data privacy, security, and usage."

Google has made no secret of its work with [health care providers](#) on computing tools to improve [patient care](#).

Google's collaboration with Ascension includes moving data and analytics to a private, secure cloud hosted by the internet firm.

Ascension could also use Google computing tools to allow employees to communicate and collaborate securely in real time from different sites, according to a post by Google cloud industry products and solutions president Tariq Shaukat.

"To be clear: under this arrangement, Ascension's data cannot be used for any other purpose than for providing these services we're offering under the agreement, and [patient data](#) cannot and will not be combined with any Google consumer data," Shaukat said.

Google disclosed little about what it is testing in Project Nightingale as it competes to be the preferred platform for patients and care providers.

The cloud team works with dozens of healthcare service providers on technology to analyze [medical data](#) and make it readily available to patients and those treating them, according to the company.

"While we appreciate your efforts to provide the public with further information about Project Nightingale, this initiative raises serious privacy concerns," the committee said in letters to Ascension and Google.

"Longstanding questions related to Google's commitment to protecting the privacy of its own users' data raise serious concerns about whether Google can be a good steward of patients' personal health information."

The US Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services is also reported to be

looking into the project.

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