

Privacy, Confidentiality and the Australian Privacy Principles.

Policy

The maintenance of privacy requires that any information regarding individual patients, including staff members who may be patients, may not be disclosed either verbally, in writing, in electronic form, by copying either at the practice or outside it, during or outside work hours, except for strictly authorised use within the patient care context at the practice or as legally directed.

There are no degrees of privacy. All patient information must be considered private and confidential, even that which is seen or heard and therefore is not to be disclosed to family, friends or others without the patient's approval or at the doctor's discretion. Any information given to authorised personnel will result in disciplinary action and possible dismissal.

Each staff member is bound by his/her confidentiality agreement, which is signed upon commencement of employment at this practice.

All information received in the course of a consultation between a doctor and the patient is considered personal health information. This information includes medical information, family information, address, employment and other demographic and accounts data obtained via reception. Medical information can include past medical and social history, current health issues and future medical care. It includes the formal medical record whether written or electronic and information held or recorded on any other medium, for example letter, fax, or electronically.

Both medical and non-medical staff in this practice have a responsibility to maintain the privacy of personal health information and related financial information. The privacy of this information is every patient's right. With this in mind, doctors are aware of the potential for breaches when:

- Discussing results and information
- Speaking too loudly to patients
- Discussing results with other doctors
- Discussing results especially with relatives of adolescents and the frail.

All medical staff are expected to comply with the Code of Ethics and/or Code of Conduct as determined by the relevant professional body.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Policy

Items for the courier or pathology are to be left in back reception in the slots provided, not on top in public view.

Whenever a door to any office, consulting or treatment room is closed staff will knock and wait for a response prior to opening the door.

It is the doctor's responsibility to keep scripts, medications, medical records and related personal patient information secure, whilst they are not in attendance in their consulting room.

Procedure

All staff must follow the listed guidelines to minimise the risk of potential breaches of confidentiality.

- Waiting patient medical records are not left in an area accessible by the public
- Charts remain turned over at front desk when not in use.
- Staff speak softly at front desk
- Only minimal personal information is discussed in a public area.
- Follow appropriate telephone procedures
- Close treatment and consulting doors

- Use privacy screens or curtains
- Computer screens must not be able to be seen or be accessible to the public including couriers and visitors.
- Computer screens displaying a previous patient's data are closed before the next patient enters the consulting room.
- When the doctor or staff leave the consulting , treatment room, the computer station, or if the patient is left alone, they will lock their computer.
- Strict guidelines are followed when releasing confidential details (phone, hard copy and electronically)

Administration of Privacy Legislation

Policy

The Practice Manager is our privacy officer who implements and monitors adherence to all privacy legislation in this practice.

The privacy officer acts as liaison for all privacy issues and patient requests for access to their personal health information. If staff have any queries concerning privacy law they are to refer to the privacy officer.

Procedure

The Practice manager attends information and training sessions with regard to Privacy Legislation Laws and trains staff and implements new policy and procedures in the practice when deemed appropriate.

A Privacy Audit of policies and procedures is conducted regularly within the practice. Following this audit, changes to the policies and procedures will be made (if necessary) and training will be conducted accordingly.