



## 5.4.1 Communication with patients via electronic means

### Policy

Staff are mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details they may not be proficient in communicating via electronic means and patient choice should be obtained before using electronic communication.

Patients are able to obtain advice or information related to their care or appointment reminders by electronic means, where the doctor determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary. Electronic communication includes: email, fax, and SMS.

Relevant practice staff and doctors determine how they communicate electronically with patients, both receiving and sending messages. All significant electronic contact with patients is recorded in the patient health records.

Practice staff and doctors should be aware of alternative modes of communication used by the disabled.

Patients are advised in the Practice Information sheet that they can request our written policy on receiving and returning electronic communication.

Communication with patients via electronic means (e.g. email and Fax) is conducted with appropriate regard to the privacy Laws relating to health information and confidentiality of the patients health information. (Refer section 6)

Staff and Patients using email/SMS or other forms of electronic messaging should be aware that it is not possible to guarantee that electronic communications will be private. (Refer to section 6).

When an email message is sent or received in the course of a person's duties, that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record.

Internal or external parties, including patients may send electronic messages. Messages from patients or those of clinical significance require a response to confirm receipt and should be documented in the patient medial record if appropriate.

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Employees should be aware that electronic communications could, depending on the technology, be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others. Electronic mail is the equivalent of a post card.

Staff members have full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox, and are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- limiting the exchange of personal emails
- refraining from responding to unsolicited or unwanted emails
- deleting hoaxes or chain emails
- email attachments from unknown senders should not be opened
- virus checking all email attachments
- maintaining appropriate language within e-communications
- ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such
- confidential information (e.g. patient information) must be encrypted.

The Practice reserves the right to check individual email as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by employees. Inappropriate use of the Email facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

The practice uses an email disclaimer notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the practice as follows:

\*\* Please be aware that this email address may not be checked daily and therefore cannot be used for the purposes of clinical advice or scheduling of appointments \*\*

NOTE: The contents of this email are confidential and may be protected by professional privilege. The contents are intended for the named recipient of this email. If the reader of this email is not the named recipient, please note that any use, reproduction disclosure or distribution of the information contained here-in is prohibited. If you have received this email in error please notify us immediately.

### **Accessing the Internet**

The Internet is a vast computer network, comprised of individual networks and computers all around the world that communicate with each other to allow information

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sharing between users. It is important to adopt secure practices when accessing and using the Internet.

The Internet can be accessed by all members of staff; however, excessive use of the Internet is not acceptable.

Staff members are encouraged to use the Internet for research activities pertaining to their role, however, should be aware that usage statistics are recorded and submitted to Management as required.

Staff members have full accountability for Internet sites accessed on their workstations, and are expected to utilise this tool in an acceptable manner.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- limiting personal use of the Internet
- accessing ONLY reputable sites and subject matter
- verifying any information taken off the Internet for business purposes prior to use
- not downloading any unnecessary or suspect information
- being aware of any potential security risks - i.e. access / viruses
- not disclosing any confidential information via the Internet without prior permission from the practice manager - i.e. Credit Card number
- maintaining the Practices confidentiality and business ethics in any dealings across the Internet
- observing copyright restrictions relating to material accessed/downloaded.

The Practice reserves the right to check individuals Internet history as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by employees. Inappropriate use of the Internet facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

### **The Practice Website**

In complying with the *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000*, our practice provides the following advice to users of our website about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

The aim of this advice is to inform users of this site about:

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What personal information is being collected  
Who is collecting personal information  
How personal information is being used  
Access to personal information collected on this site  
Security of personal information collected on this site.

The practice privacy policy is posted on the website and available for download. The website is continually monitored to ensure it is kept current and up to date. It contains the minimum information required on the practice information sheet. Refer Section 5 Practice information sheet. Any changes to the practice information sheet are also reflected on the website.

If it contains any advertising the practice should include a disclaimer that the practice does not endorse any advertised services or products. Advertising must comply with the MBA Code of Conduct on advertising available at:

<http://goodmedicalpractice.org.au/>.

## **SMS Policy**

SMS reminder/recalls can only be sent to a patient who has agreed to receive SMS notifications.

If a patient has opted not to receive SMS notification, the recall/reminder system will now allow for the patient to receive an SMS notification. The patient must be contacted by their preferred method

i.e. telephone

Below are the SMS templates to be used:

### Appointment Reminder

<Patient name>, a reminder that you have an appointment <Date> at <time> with<GP Name>. Please call Y to confirm or N to cancel

### Recall Appointment

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<patient name>, Please call Sunlander Medical Centre on 9304 1424 to make a follow up result appointment with <GP name> Thank you

#### Reminder Recall

<Patient name>, please call Sunlander Medical Centre on 9304 1424 to make an appointment with <GP name> for <reminder reason> Thank you

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