

1.1. Communication with patients by electronic means

1.1.1. Policy

Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via electronic means and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication. Electronic communication includes email, facsimile and Short Message Service (SMS).

Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy

1.1.2. Procedure

Our practice's primary reason for communicating electronically to patients is to issue appointment reminders and we verify the correct contact details of the patient at the time of the appointment being made.

Whilst not encouraged, our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by electronic means, but only where the general practitioner determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by electronic means is suitable. Our practice will only provide information that is of a general, non-urgent nature and will not initiate electronic communication (other than SMS appointment reminders) with patients. Any electronic communication received from patients is also used as a method to verify the contact details we have recorded on file are correct and up-to-date.

Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy. Before obtaining and documenting the patient's consent, patients are fully informed through information contained *in the new patient registration form and our website* of the risks associated with electronic communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient. Our practice also has an automatic email response system set up so that whenever an email is received into the practice, the sender receives an automated message reinforcing information regarding these risks.

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. Patients are informed of any costs to be incurred as a result of the electronic advice or information being provided, and all electronic contact with patients is recorded in their health record.

All members of the practice team are made aware of our policy regarding electronic communication with patients during induction, and are reminded of this policy on an ongoing basis. They are made aware that electronic communications could be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others.

Each member of the practice team holds full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox, and they 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 are not to be opened
- Virus checking all email attachments
- Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communications
- Ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such, and
- Confidential information (e.g. patient information) must be encrypted.

Our practice reserves the right to check an individual's email accounts as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by members of the practice team. 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 stating

****Disclaimer: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the person or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify us. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the person named. If you are not named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this e-mail. Please notify the sender immediately by e-mail if you received this email and delete the email. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing of this information is strictly prohibited.*****

1.2. Using social media in our practice

Please refer to our Social media policy which has been adopted from RACGP's website www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth/social-media/guide

1.2.1. Policy

'Social media' is defined as online social networks used to disseminate information through online interaction.

Regardless of whether social media is used for business related activity or for personal reasons, the following standards apply to members of our practice team, including general practitioners. Practitioners and team members are legally responsible for their postings online. Practitioners and

team members may be subject to liability and disciplinary action including termination of employment or contract if their posts are found to be in breach of this policy.

1.2.2. Procedure

Our practice has appointed *Principal GP / Practice Manager with designated responsibility for managing the practice's social media*, as our social media officer with designated responsibility to manage and monitor the practice's social media accounts. All posts on the practice's social media websites must be approved by this person.

When using the practice's social media, all members of our practice team will not:

- Post any material that:
 - Is unlawful, threatening, defamatory, pornographic, inflammatory, menacing, or offensive
 - Infringes or breaches another person's rights (including intellectual property rights) or privacy, or misuses the practice's or another person's confidential information (e.g. do not submit confidential information relating to our patients, personal information of staff, or information concerning the practice's business operations that have not been made public)
 - Is materially damaging or could be materially damaging to the practice's reputation or image, or another individual
 - Is in breach of any of the practice's policies or procedures
- Use social media to send unsolicited commercial electronic messages, or solicit other users to buy or sell products or services or donate money
- Impersonate another person or entity (for example, by pretending to be someone else or another practice employee or other participant when you submit a contribution to social media) or by using another's registration identifier without permission
- Tamper with, hinder the operation of, or make unauthorised changes to the social media sites
- Knowingly transmit any virus or other disabling feature to or via the practice's social media account, or use in any email to a third party, or the social media site
- Attempt to do or permit another person to do any of these things:
 - Claim or imply that you are speaking on the practice's behalf, unless you are authorised to do so
 - Disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the practice, or to any third party that has disclosed information to the practice
- Be defamatory, harassing, or in violation of any other applicable law
- Include confidential or copyrighted information (e.g. music, videos, text belonging to third parties), and
- Violate any other applicable policy of the practice.

All members of our practice team must obtain the relevant approval from our social media officer prior to posting any public representation of the practice on social media websites. The practice reserves the right to remove any content at its own discretion.

Any social media must be monitored in accordance with the practice's current policies on the use of internet, email and computers.

Our practice complies with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) national law, and takes reasonable steps to remove testimonials that advertise our services (which may include comments about the practitioners themselves). Our practice is not responsible for removing (or trying to have removed) unsolicited testimonials published on a website or in social media over which we do not have control.

Any social media posts by members of our practice team on their personal social media platforms should:

- Include the following disclaimer example in a reasonably prominent place if they are identifying themselves as an employee of the practice on any posting: *'The views expressed in this post are mine and do not reflect the views of the practice/business/committees/boards that I am a member of',* and
- Respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Social media activities internally and externally of the practice must be in line with this policy.

1.3. Practice website

1.3.1. Policy

Our practice is committed to making information about our practice and its services readily accessible for all patients and the community. One way to achieve this is through our practice website.

1.3.2. Procedure

In complying with the *Privacy Act 1988*, 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 our website about:

- What personal information is collected by our practice
- Who is collecting the personal information
- How personal information is used by our practice
- Access to personal information collected by our practice, and
- Security of personal information collected by our practice.

The practice's privacy policy is posted on the website and is available for download. The website is continually monitored to ensure it is kept current and up-to-date and contains at a minimum the information included on our practice information sheet (refer to **Section 5.18 – Practice information sheet**). Any changes to our practice information sheet are also reflected on the website.

As our website contains advertisements from time to time, we ensure any advertising complies with the Medical Board of Australia's *Good medical practice: A code of conduct for doctors in Australia* and includes a disclaimer on any advertising which states that the practice does not endorse the advertised services or products.