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Communicating by Electronic means

Electronic communication - Policy

Communicating by Electronic Means

Port Sorell Medical Centre complies with the [Standards for General Practice](#) promulgated by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (as amended from time to time) in relation to information security and electronic communications (5th Standards).

In accordance with the Standards, the person who is designated as having primary responsibility for information security and electronic communications is the Practice Manager, Noleen Davey. The Designated Practice Team Member's responsibilities include:

- knowing who and when to call for expert advice;
- giving relevant Practice employees the contact details of any external expert, the Practice has used;
- educating the Practice team about data security and the need to follow security protocols and policies; and
- monitoring whether employees are following security protocols and policies.

Communicating by electronic includes SMS, facsimile, and Email communication.

Forms of electronic communication used by Port Sorell Medical:

- SMS
- Email including secure email.
- Hotdoc [Hotdoc Privacy Policy](#)
- Via Best Practice for E-prescriptions
- Healthlink

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.

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 our information privacy policy 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 automated email response system set up so that when an email is received from our website, or to the practice, the sender receives an automated message reinforcing information regarding these risks.

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, oriented, and stored by others.

Our practice conducts appropriate patient authorised contact by electronic means for the health management purposes, taking into consideration patient privacy and confidentiality.

The health management purposes include:

- Appointment reminders
- Preventative health reminders
- Non-urgent appointment notifications
- Referrals
- Health summary and clinical records transfer
- Communications between other health professionals, nursing home facilities or allied health professionals.

Ongoing education and training on privacy and confidentiality must be provided to all staff and be included in the new staff induction program. These issues are addressed in [Induction of new staff members](#).

SMS communication

Always ensure we have up-to-date contact details and patient information listed in a patient's medical record. This includes any changes to Next-of-kin and/or Emergency contact information, which includes address details.

Where a patient lists another person's mobile number as a contact, it is required that we explain that by doing so appointment and health reminders will be sent to this number and ensure that the patient understands and consent is given. Notation of consent is recorded in the patient record. Where a patient does not wish for this to happen, we are required to explain the "opt-out" process and ensure the consent boxes for all associated SMS messages is left blank.

With patient consent our practice will send SMS messages to the mobile number listed on a patient's medical record. If a patient does not wish to receive SMS notifications from the practice, we inform the patient they can either use the "Opt-out" option in the link any SMS messages received, or they can contact reception staff to assist them with the "Opt-out" arrangement on their behalf using Best Practice software. No private or health information should ever be contained in any health related messages received, and these messages are always sent protected by the user needing to enter specific personal information to access the health message.

Email use

The Practice requires that electronic communication (e.g. via email) is conducted with appropriate regard to the private, confidential and sensitive nature of the health information with which the Practice deals. All employees must ensure that they use internet, email and secure messaging in connection with their work in a manner which complies with the Practice's privacy obligations, and in a respectful and professional manner.

The Practice uses the following confidentiality and privilege notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the Practice:

"Please consider the environment before printing this email."

The content & attachments of this message are confidential. If you have received it by mistake, please inform us by an email reply and then delete the message. It is unlawful to copy, forward or in any way reveal the contents of this message to anyone. The integrity and security of this email cannot be guaranteed over the internet. Encrypted messaging systems are preferred for confidential communications. Please be aware that our e-mail communications are not encrypted, it is the policy of Port Sorell Medical Centre not to use email for sharing confidential information. Therefore, the sender will not be held liable for any damage caused by the message. The contents of this email are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent views of the Port Sorell Medical Centre."

What constitutes best practice when using email?

Our practice does not send routine email communications to patients. There are some risks associated with electronic communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by

someone other than the intended recipient. It is because of this our practice does not send any communications to patients or other healthcare providers by standard email, however we will utilise an encrypted email service, SP Secure email. Email communication containing personal health information is discouraged between patient and practice due to these communications not being encrypted and secure to protect the information being transmitted.

When using email in connection with the Practice, all employees should be mindful to comply with the following practices:

- do not open an unexpected email, even from people known to you, without taking proper precautions
- use an antivirus mail filter to screen emails before downloading those emails;
- do not use the 'preview pane' in your email program as this automatically opens your email when you click on the header;
- save attachments and check for viruses before opening or executing them (note this does not relate to the clinical secure messaging but to attachments received through email and websites);
- do not run programs directly from websites. If you need to download a file from a website, check for viruses first using antivirus software; and
- do not send or forward unsolicited email messages, including the sending of 'junk mail' or other advertising material (ie email spam); and
- do not use email for broadcast messages on personal, political or non-business matters.

Website safety and security

The Practice has a Service Level Agreement with Your Health, Unit B, 19-18 Loyalty Road, North Rocks NSW 2151 for all web management services. The Practice Manager is responsible for liaising with Your Health to ensure accuracy and currency of website content, compliance with [Guidelines for Advertising of Regulated Health Services](#) set by the Medical Board of Australia and management of the Agreement. Our website is hosted separately from Practice data.