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# PRIORITY HEALTH GROUP PRIVACY POLICY

## Purpose

To ensure patients who receive care from the Practice are comfortable in entrusting their health information to the Practice. This policy provides information to patients as to how their personal and sensitive information (which includes their health information) is collected and used within the Practice, and the circumstances in which the Practice may disclose it to third parties. It also sets out how patients may seek the correction of any information, and how they can make a complaint about a breach of privacy legislation. A patient Health record is a record where health data and other information related to the care of a patient is maintained.

## Related Standards

RACGP Compliance Indicators for the Australian Privacy Principles: an addendum to the Computer and Information Security Standards (Second edition, 2014).

## Background and Rationale

We are committed to protecting the privacy of patient information and to handling your personal information in a responsible manner in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012, the Australian Privacy Principles and relevant State and Territory privacy legislation (referred to as Privacy Legislation).

The Australian Privacy Principles (APP) provide a privacy protection framework that supports the rights and obligations of collecting, holding, using, accessing and correcting personal information.

The APP consist of 13 principle-based laws and apply equally to paper-based and digital environments. The APP complement the long-standing General Practice obligation to manage personal information in a regulated, open and transparent manner.

This policy will guide Practice staff in meeting these legal obligations. It also details to patients how the Practice uses their personal information. The policy must be made available to patients upon request.

This Privacy Policy is current from August 2016. From time to time we may make changes to our policy, processes and systems in relation to how we handle your personal information. We will update this Privacy Policy to reflect any changes. Those changes will be available on our website and in the practice.

## Practice Procedure

The Practice will:

- provide a copy of this policy upon request, and make one available on the Practice website
- ensure staff comply with the APP and deal appropriately with inquiries or concerns
- take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to implement practices, procedures and systems to ensure compliance with the APP and deal with inquiries or complaints
- collect personal information for the primary purpose of managing a patient's healthcare and for financial claims and payments.

## Staff Responsibility

The Practice's staff will take reasonable steps to ensure patients understand:

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- what information has been and is being collected
  - why the information is being collected, and whether this is due to a legal requirement
  - how the information will be used or disclosed
  - why and when their consent is necessary
  - the Practice's procedures for access and correction of information, and responding to complaints of information breaches, including by providing this policy

## **Patient Consent**

The Practice will only interpret and apply a patient's consent for the primary purpose for which it was provided. The Practice staff must seek additional consent from the patient if the personal information collected may be used for any other purpose.

## **Collection of Information**

The Practice will need to collect personal information as a provision of clinical services to a patient at the practice. Collected personal information may include patients':

- Names, addresses, date of birth, gender, ethnicity, religion and contact details
- Medicare number (where available) (for identification and claiming purposes)
- Healthcare Identifiers
- Health fund details.
- Medical information including medical history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunisations, social history, family history and risk factors
- credit card / debit card details

We collect information in various ways, such as over the phone or in writing, in person in our clinic or over the internet if you transact with us online. This information may be collected by medical and nonmedical staff.

A patient's personal information may be held at the Practice in various forms:

- as paper records
- as electronic records
- as visual records – x-rays, CT scans, videos and photos
- as audio recordings.

The Practice's procedure for collecting personal information is set out below.

1. Practice staff collect patients' personal and demographic information via registration when patients present to the Practice for the first time. Patients are encouraged to pay attention to the collection statement within the form and information about the management of collected information and patient privacy.
2. During the course of providing medical services, the Practice's healthcare practitioners will consequently, collect further personal information.
3. Personal information may also be collected from the patient's guardian or responsible person (where practicable and necessary), or from any other involved healthcare specialists.

The Practice holds all personal information securely, whether in electronic format, in protected information systems or in hard copy format in a secured environment. This practice utilises iCloud backup solution for limited storage of data, this information is secure, encrypted and requires 2-factor authentication. Please note that only relevant health information will included in referrals.

## **Use and Disclosure of Information**

We will treat your personal information as strictly private and confidential. Personal information will only be used for the purpose of providing medical services and for claims and payments, unless otherwise consented to. Some disclosure may occur to third parties engaged by or for the Practice for business purposes, such as Accreditation or for the provision of Information Technology. These third parties are required to comply with this Policy under signed, written agreements.

The Practice will inform the patient where there is a statutory requirement to disclose certain personal information (for example, some diseases require mandatory notification).

The Practice will not disclose personal information to any third party other than in the course of providing medical services, without full disclosure to the patient or the recipient, the reason for the information transfer and full consent from the patient. The Practice will not disclose personal information to anyone outside Australia without need and without patient consent.

Exceptions to disclose without patient consent are where the information is:

- For medical defence purposes;
- As required by law in instances of mandatory reporting of communicable diseases;
- Necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to a patient's life, health or safety or public health safety, or it is impracticable to obtain patient's consent;
- To assist in locating a missing person
- For the purpose the patient was advised during consult with the treating Doctor;
- As required during the normal operation of services provided. i.e. for referral to a medical specialist or other health service provider;
- To establish, exercise or defend an equitable claim
- For the purpose of a confidential dispute resolution process
- Some disclosure may occur to third parties engaged by or for the practice for the Practice for business purposes such as accreditation or for the provision of information technology. These third parties are required to comply with this policy.

The Practice may use a patient's contact information as supplied to the Practice (mailing address, telephone numbers (including mobile phones and email addresses) in order to contact patients for appointment reminders, recall reminders and to request a patient to attend to discuss, for example, test results. At no time will a patient's actual medical information be sent to them in this way (as we have no way to guarantee who sees it) without the patient's express permission. For the above reasons, the practice does not undertake to give medical advice to patients via email requests.

If a patient wishes to forward copies of their confidential medical information to us via email they may do so to [myGP@priorityhealthgroup.com.au](mailto:myGP@priorityhealthgroup.com.au), they are considered to be doing so at their own risk.

The Practice will not use any personal information in relation to direct marketing to a patient without that patient's express consent. Patients may opt-out of direct marketing at any time by notifying the Practice in a letter or email. The Practice will comply with Australian Privacy Principle 8 — cross-border disclosure of personal information when health information is likely to be disclosed overseas.

The Practice evaluates all unsolicited information it receives to decide if it should be kept, acted on or destroyed.

## **Data Quality and Security**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that your personal information is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant. For this purpose, our staff may ask you to confirm that your contact details are correct when you attend a consultation. We request that you let us know if any of the information we hold about you is incorrect or out of date.

Personal information that we hold is protected by:

- Securing our premises
- Placing passwords and varying access levels on databases to limit access and protect electronic information from unauthorized interference, access, modification and disclosure
- Providing locked cabinets and rooms for the storage of physical records.

## **Access, Corrections and Privacy Concerns**

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The Practice acknowledges patients may request access to their medical records. Patients are encouraged to make this request in writing, and the Practice will respond within a reasonable time. We may deny access to your medical records in certain circumstances permitted by law, for example, if disclosure may cause a serious threat to your health or safety. We will always tell you why access is denied and the options you have to respond to our decision.

The Practice will take reasonable steps to correct personal information where it is satisfied they are not accurate or up to date. From time to time, the Practice will ask patients to verify the personal information held by the Practice is correct and up to date. Patients may also request the Practice corrects or updates their information, and patients should make such requests in writing.

### **How can you lodge a privacy related complaint, and how will the complaint be handled at our practice?**

We take complaints and concerns about the privacy of patients' personal information seriously. Patients should express any privacy concerns you may have in writing. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with its complaint resolution procedure.

Please address all complaints to:

Director of Operations and Nursing  
Priority Health Group  
53 Ruby Street  
Emerald, QLD 4720, or

[schifadza@priorityhealthgroup.com.au](mailto:schifadza@priorityhealthgroup.com.au)

### **Dealing with us anonymously**

You have the right to deal with us anonymously or under a pseudonym unless it is impracticable for us to do so or unless we are required or authorised by law to only deal with identified individuals.

We will endeavour to respond to all complaints within a reasonable time period, which will not be longer than 21 working days.

### **Policy review statement**

This policy will be reviewed and updated/amended on a six-monthly basis.

### **Contact Us**

In regard to any privacy concern, you can contact us at:

Phone: 07 4910 7800

Fax: 07 3040 4434

Email: [myGP@priorityhealthgroup.com.au](mailto:myGP@priorityhealthgroup.com.au)

### **Post:**

C/O - Operations Manager

Priority Health Group

53 Ruby Street

Emerald, QLD 4720

### **More Information**

For more information, visit the website of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. You will be able to access a range of general and health related privacy information here

<http://www.oaic.gov.au/>