

Policy taken from Policies and Procedures Handbook UCD- HCD

1.1. Communication with patients by electronic means

1.1.1. Policy

The practice recognises the importance of electronic communication and is committed to ensuring that all communication conducted via electronic means is managed in a manner that protects patient privacy, confidentiality, and security.

Electronic communication includes email, facsimile, SMS, and other approved electronic messaging systems.

Patient consent is obtained prior to communicating clinical information electronically where appropriate. The practice acknowledges that not all patients may be proficient in using electronic communication and will ensure that alternative communication methods are available when required.

All electronic communications are managed in accordance with the practice's privacy, confidentiality, and information security requirements.

Electronic communication is intended to enhance administrative processes and support patient care while maintaining appropriate safeguards for personal health information.

1.1.2. Procedure

All members of the practice team are educated on the practice's electronic communication policy during induction and through ongoing training and policy reviews.

Staff are responsible for ensuring that all electronic communication is professional, appropriate, and compliant with privacy and confidentiality requirements. This includes:

- Maintaining professional and respectful language in all electronic communications.
- Verifying patient contact details prior to sending information electronically.
- Not responding to unsolicited, suspicious, or inappropriate emails.
- Deleting hoax, spam, or chain emails.
- Not opening attachments or links from unknown or suspicious senders.

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- Using practice email accounts for practice-related communication only.

Use of Email

The practice email address is provided for administrative communication purposes only.

Patients must not use email to:

- Seek clinical advice or medical opinions.
- Request prescriptions.
- Request referrals.
- Book, cancel, or alter appointments.
- Communicate urgent medical concerns.

Security of Electronic Communications

The practice uses secure and encrypted email systems to protect patient information.

Clinical and medical documents sent electronically are password protected to enhance security and confidentiality.

To protect patient privacy, password-protected documents are secured using a four-digit password based on the patient's date of birth in DDMM format.

Where clinical information is sent electronically, staff verify the recipient's email address prior to transmission and take reasonable steps to ensure information is sent only to the intended recipient. While the practice implements security measures including encryption and password protection, patients are advised that electronic communication carries inherent risks, and absolute security cannot be guaranteed.

The practice offers electronic prescriptions (eScripts), which may be sent to the patient's nominated phone number following verification of patient details.

Documentation

Where patient consent is required for electronic communication, the consent will be documented in the patient's health record.

Any concerns, preferences, restrictions, or special arrangements relating to electronic communication will also be documented in the patient's record where appropriate.

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Email Disclaimer and Automated Notice

All outgoing emails include the following notice:

Important Note, to protect your privacy and maintain confidentiality, all clinical/medical documents will be password protected using a 4-digit password based on the patient's DATE OF BIRTH in DDMM format.

This email address is provided for administrative communications only and must not be used for clinical advice or urgent medical matters.

Please DO NOT email any Clinical questions or health concerns / Prescription or referral requests / Appointment bookings or changes.

For assistance, please contact our reception team on (02) 4204 9734 (UCD) or (02) 4208 3655 (HCD), or book online via HotDoc.

In a medical emergency, call 000 immediately or present to the nearest Emergency Department.

DISCLAIMER: The content of this email is confidential and intended for the recipient specified in message only. It is strictly forbidden to share any part of this message with any third party, without a written consent of the sender. If you received this message by mistake, please reply to this message and follow with its deletion, so that we can ensure such a mistake does not occur in the future.

Responsibilities

The Practice Manager, Dr Priyank Gupta, and Dr Priyanka Singh are responsible for reviewing and maintaining this policy.

All practice team members are responsible for complying with this policy and applying appropriate privacy, confidentiality, and security measures when communicating electronically with patients, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislative, technological, privacy, information security, or operational changes occur.

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