

Practice Privacy Policy: Managing Your Health Information

Policy Revision: October 2024

The purpose of this document is to outline how UC Medical & Counselling Centre complies with its confidentiality and privacy obligations.

Collection of information

The Practice will need to collect personal information during the provision of clinical & or counselling services to a patient / client of the practice.

Collected personal information will include patient's

- Names, addresses, and contact details including next of kin and emergency contacts;
- Medicare number or OSHC details (if relevant) for claiming purposes;
- Healthcare identifiers; and
- Medical and psychological information including medical / psychological history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunisations, social history, family history and risk factors.

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

- As electronic records in dedicated medical software.
- As paper records (in the case of faxes received from pathology/radiology providers, and correspondence from specialists or other allied health providers etc. before they are scanned into the patient's medical file.
- As visual media– x-rays, CT scans, videos & or photos.

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

- Practice staff collect a patient's 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 which provides information about the management of collected information and the patient's privacy.
- During the provision of medical/psychological services, the Practice's health practitioners will collect further relevant personal information.
- Personal information may also be collected from the patient's guardian or responsible person (where practicable and necessary), or from any other involved healthcare providers.

Privacy and Security of your Medical Record

This practice acknowledges the sensitive and confidential nature of the information which has been collected. All staff/contractors are required to sign Confidentiality Agreements at the start of their employment which outlines obligations and expectations in relation to privacy and health information that they will have access to. This practice requires all staff to observe obligations of confidentiality during and after the termination of their employment with this practice.

The Practice holds all personal information securely, whether in electronic format, (in protected information systems), or in hard copy format (in a secured environment awaiting destruction via confidential waste). All electronically stored files are password-protected and regular backups of data are performed.

Use and disclosure of information

Personal information will only be used for the purpose of providing medical & or counselling services, and for claims and payments, unless otherwise consented to by the patient. Some disclosure may occur to third parties engaged by or for the Practice for business purposes, such as Accreditation (AGPAL) or for the provision of information technology. These third parties are required to comply with this policy. 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 while providing medical/counselling services, without full disclosure to the patient or the recipient, the reason for the information transfer and with 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 disclosure is

- Required by law e.g. Subpoena, court order, suspected child abuse or non-accidental physical injury of self or others)
- Necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to a patient's life, health or safety or public health or safety, or it is impractical to obtain the patient's consent
- To assist in locating a missing person
- To establish, exercise or defend an equitable claim
- For a confidential dispute resolution process.

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 written notification to the Practice.

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

Accessing your medical record

This Practice acknowledges that patients have the right to choose their medical practitioner and to request that their medical records be transferred to another medical practitioner to take over their care. The Practice has designated forms for the transfer of medical / psychological information between health providers. A reasonable fee will be applicable.

Following receipt of a request for the transfer of a medical record, the practice has an obligation to respond to the request within two weeks. The response can be in the form of requesting a payment of a fee to provide the record, to provide a copy of the record, or provide an explanation of why we are not going to provide a copy of the record.

Where a fee is charged the practice has an obligation to provide a copy of the requested record within a week of receiving payment (or within 30 days of receiving the request to access the record, whichever is sooner).

Where a patient has requested access to their own medical record sometimes this request may be denied. Should this occur the practice is required to provide an explanation as to why this decision has been made, for example if allowing a patient to see their own medical or psychological record would pose a significant risk to the patient's life or health, or the life or health of another individual.

Corrections and accuracy of information

This Practice will take reasonable steps to correct personal information where it is satisfied, they are inaccurate, are incomplete, misleading, or not up to date. From time to time, our Practice will ask patients to verify that the personal information held by us is correct and up to date. Patients may also request that we correct or update their information. These requests should be made in writing.

Any request for correction to be made to a medical /psychological record must be made by the patient / client, or by someone who is authorised to make it on their behalf e.g. legal guardian or another authorised person. A request to have a correction made to a record (medical /psychological) must be responded to within a reasonable period, generally within 30 days. The patient/client must be notified if the request is refused, and the reason(s) why.

Privacy of our Website

Our [website](#) contains links to other websites for the convenience of our patients. We encourage users to check the privacy statements of any linked website.

Complaints

The Practice takes complaints and concerns about the privacy of patients' personal information seriously. A patient or client can make a complaint if they believe a provider has not handled their health information properly. Patients should express any privacy concerns in writing to the designated Privacy Officer of the practice, Dr Jenny Weekes (Director). The complaint will be responded to within 30 days of having been received by the Privacy Officer. The Practice will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with its complaint resolution procedure.

If a patient / client feels that there are not satisfied with the manner in which their complaint has been dealt with they can seek to have their complaint reviewed by the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#).

If you should have any questions about our Privacy Policy and your health information, please direct them to our staff at the Medical & Counselling Centre, or to Dr Jenny Weekes, Director, University of Canberra Medical & Counselling Centre.



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