

## Introduction

This privacy policy is to provide information to you, our patient, on how your personal information (which includes your health information) is collected and used within our practice, and the circumstances in which we may share it with third parties. Your information is held within the practice as an Electronic Medical Record.

## Definition of an Electronic Medical Record

The fundamental objective of a clinical health record is to encompass essential patient information crucial for optimal care, as it significantly contributes to informed clinical decisions. Our practice supports a paperless system and all of our patient records are stored in the format of an electronic medical record.

The term 'Electronic Medical Record' encompasses a broad spectrum of health information, comprising, but not limited to, progress notes (whether handwritten or electronic), referral letters, specialist communications, hospital discharge summaries, pathology and radiology images along with corresponding reports, various test results, photographs, driver licence medical records, medical certificates, disability certificate applications, and medico-legal reports.

## Why and when your consent is necessary.

When you register as a patient of our practice, you provide consent for our GPs and practice staff to access and use your personal information so they can provide you with the best possible healthcare. Only staff who need to see your personal information will have access to it. If we need to use your information for anything else, we will seek additional consent from you to do this.

## Why do we collect, use, hold and share your personal information?

Our practice will need to collect your personal information to provide healthcare services to you. Our main purpose for collecting, using, holding and sharing your personal information is to manage your health. We also use it for directly-related business activities, such as financial claims and payments, practice audits and accreditation, and business processes (e.g. staff training).

## What personal information do we collect?

The information we will collect about you includes:

- Names, date of birth, address/es, contact details

- ☐ Medical information including medical history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunisations, social history, family history and risk factors
- ☐ Medicare number (where available) for identification and claiming purposes
- ☐ Healthcare identifiers

## 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.

## How do we collect your personal information?

Our practice will collect your personal information:

1. When you make and/or arrive for your first appointment our practice staff will collect your personal and demographic information via your registration with us.
2. During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information.
3. We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, send us an email or SMS, telephone us, make an online appointment or communicate with us using social media. Information can also be collected through Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (eTP), MyHealth Record/PCEHR system (e.g. via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary).
4. In some circumstances personal information may also be collected from other sources. Often this is because it is not practical or reasonable to collect it from you directly. This may include information from:
  - ☐ your guardian or responsible person
  - ☐ other involved healthcare providers, such as specialists, allied health professionals, hospitals, community health services and pathology and diagnostic imaging services
  - ☐ Medicare or the Department of Veteran's Affairs (as necessary).

## When, why and with whom do we share your personal information?

We sometimes share your personal information:

- ☐ With third parties who work with our practice for business purposes, such as accreditation agencies or information technology providers – these third parties are required to comply with APPs and this policy
- ☐ With other healthcare providers
- ☐ When it is required or authorised by law (e.g. court subpoenas)
- ☐ When it is 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 the purpose of confidential dispute resolution process

- When there is a statutory requirement to share certain personal information (e.g. some diseases require mandatory notification)
- During the course of providing medical services, through Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (eTP), MyHealth Record system (e.g. via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary).

Only people who need to access your information will be able to do so. Other than in the course of providing medical services or as otherwise described in this policy, our practice will not share personal information with any third party without your consent.

We will not share your personal information with anyone outside Australia (unless under exceptional circumstances that are permitted by law) without your consent.

Our practice will not use your personal information for marketing any of our goods or services directly to you without your express consent. If you do consent, you may opt out of direct marketing any time by notifying our practice in writing.

## How do we store and protect your personal information?

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms, e.g. as paper records, as electronic records, as visual records (X-rays, CT scans, videos and photos). Our practice stores all personal information securely. Our computer system is appropriately secured by the use of firewalls and antivirus software. Software used within the practice is protected by multiple levels of passwords known only to staff of the practice. Confidentiality agreements have been signed by all staff and contractors.

Our practice uses document automation technologies centered on word processing functions of our patient database system. These technologies provide efficient templates for the production of clinical documents such as clinical summaries and referral letters, drawing on relevant clinical data from your personal Electronic Medical Record. Your doctor can select/deselect information as deemed necessary for each circumstance. Only information relevant to each particular referral is selected and included in that referral document.

## Electronic transmission of referrals and prescriptions

Referrals and prescriptions can be transmitted electronically by patient request. Electronic data transmission of patient health information to and from our practice is done so using secure encrypted formats and the use of PINs (Personal Identification Numbers). Electronic medication management (eMM) enables all stages of the prescribing, dispensing and supply of medicines to be completed electronically. eMM has the potential to reduce errors and adverse medication outcomes. Electronic transfer of prescriptions is an essential part of electronic medication management.

Our practice supports a prescribing process where the prescription is generated electronically, encrypted and authenticated via an organisational digital electronic signature and transmitted securely for dispensing by a pharmacy.

Our practice ensures that all prescribers use, where appropriate, eTP as a component of their prescribing process and has selected conformant clinical software for the eTP as regulated by the Federal Government. We also provide practice-based education and skills training to all staff to ensure competency in the use of the eTP.

## How can you access and correct your personal information at our practice?

You have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information. Our practice acknowledges patients may request access to their medical records. We require you to put this request in writing to your treating doctor and our practice will respond within a reasonable time (generally within 30 days). A minimal fee to cover costs of complying with your request (e.g. photocopying cost) may be charged.

Our practice will take reasonable steps to correct your personal information where the information is not accurate or up to date. From time-to-time, we will ask you to verify that your personal information held by our practice is correct and up to date. You may also request that we correct or update your information, and you should make such requests in writing to your doctor or the practice manager.

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

We take complaints and concerns regarding privacy seriously. You should express any privacy concerns you may have in writing, addressed to: The Practice Manager, [mlcmedicalcentre@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mlcmedicalcentre@ozemail.com.au). We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as practical and advise you of the steps to be taken regarding the means of resolving the issue.

You may also contact the OAIC (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner). Generally, the OAIC will require you to give them time to respond before they will investigate. For further information visit [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au) or call the OAIC on 1300 336 002.

## Privacy and our website

Our practice does not collect any information via our website (e.g. using website analytics, cookies, etc.).

Our practice and our web hosting provider collect a small and necessary amount of information when you visit our website. This information includes your IP address, time of access, web browser version and list of pages on our website visited. These details are typically referred to as "HTTP access logs" and it is extremely difficult to operate a website without collecting this information.

We use this information for:

- ☐ Determining if certain pages or links on our website are broken.
- ☐ Detecting and mitigating attacks against our website (including DDOS attacks).
- ☐ Determining the popularity of certain pages on our website.

- Other technical operations related to the running of our website.

We may share this information with our hosting and technical providers for the purposes of solving problems with our website. We do not sell or share this information for other purposes.

## Document automation technologies that can access your personal information

We use automation technologies that can access your personal information, including:

1. Referral templates. When a doctor writes a referral for you to visit another medical specialist, some of your personal medical information is automatically extracted from your records and added to the referral documents. Different templates are used for different referral types and circumstances, extracting the specific medical information appropriate to the addressed specialist.
2. Automated reminders. Our medical software searches our database of medical records for important upcoming events (such as specific, important appointments) and sends automated SMS messages.
3. E-report delivery software. Blood analysis, medical imaging, medical practices and other medical institutions that a patient visits for tests or procedures will send us medical reports about the patients. These are automatically assigned to our doctors for review or manually flagged for administrative intervention if any personal details are incorrect or dubious (e.g. misspellings in patient names or birthdate).
4. De-identified and anonymised study scripts. See "When, why and with whom do we share your personal information?" (above) for more information.

## Policy review statement

This privacy policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is in accordance with any changes that may occur. If an amendment takes place then:

1. A sign at reception will be installing notifying of the updated policy, and
2. The policy text on our website will be edited to reflect the new policy.

You can request a copy of our policy in-person at our reception desks, via post or via email.

\*This policy is current as of: April 2024 (This policy is to be reviewed annually - next review due: 01/04/2025)