

## **PRIVACY AND MANAGING HEALTH INFORMATION**

### **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.

### **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 that needs 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 your:

- names, date of birth, addresses, 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
- health fund details.

### **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 may collect your personal information in several different ways.

1. When you make your first appointment our practice staff will collect your personal and demographic information via your registration.
2. During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information. Information can also be collected through My Health Record, via Shared Health Summary or Event Summary. Your GP or Registered Nurse will electronically upload this information
3. We may also collect your personal information when you, send us an email or SMS, telephone us,

make an online appointment or communicate with us using social media.

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
  - your health fund, Medicare, or the Department of Veterans' Affairs (as necessary).

### **When, why and with who 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 (eg 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 My Health Record (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 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 at 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. Your medical record is stored electronically. All reports, correspondence and results of investigations are received securely by electronic means and stored directly into your electronic file. We do not keep paper files in our practice.

There are times where we may photograph clinical images appropriate to your care, such as a healing wound. These images would only be taken with your consent and are downloaded into your patient file.

Our practice stores all personal information securely. Your electronic file is password protected and can only be accessed by your GP and nurses involved in your care. Each of our staff members or contractors signs a confidentiality deed / agreement prior to working in our team.

### 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. Hunter River Medical Centre and any access to the file must be authorised by your GP.

- If you wish to see your file, you can request to do so by talking with your GP.
- If you would like the content of your file sent to another Practice, your new practice will need to send instructions via letter (signed by you). Once we receive this information, your GP will send a health summary via fax to your new Doctor. Your record will be sent to the same practice in digital format within 30 days. This will be done via secure post.
- We are not legally able to send your patient record to your personal address.
- Our administration fee for this process is \$30

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 current.

You may also request that we correct or update your information, and you should make such requests in writing to our Practice Manager via [manager@hunterrivermedicalcentre.com.au](mailto:manager@hunterrivermedicalcentre.com.au) or, post to 66 King Street, East Maitland. 2323

### 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. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure. Please contact our Practice Manager via email: [manager@hunterrivermedicalcentre.com.au](mailto:manager@hunterrivermedicalcentre.com.au) or, post to 66 King Street, East Maitland. 2323. We will address any issues as a matter of priority and provide a written response to your concerns.

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 363 992.

In NSW the **Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002** (NSW) (HRIP Act) outlines how NSW health service providers must manage the health information of individuals in NSW. The [NSW Information and Privacy Commission](#) administer the HRIP Act and accept complaints about the handling of health information.

### Policy review statement

Hunter River Medical Centre reviews all policies regularly to ensure compliance. Any changes that occur regarding how we collect, use, hold and share your personal information will be conveyed to you by signage in the waiting room and individual consent when required.

